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This ISSUE

woman IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU!

It might feel like the longest month EVER but, don't worry, we have lots in this issue to put a smile on your face. Pay day is still a couple of weeks away and with that in mind we have some fab offers. From incredible designer doubles (p18), saving you £££££, to 25% off Molton Brown (p24), £10 theatre tickets (p36) and FREE membership to Slimming World (p33).

Plus, read Alexandra and Nicky's inspiring weight-loss stories (p27) – proof that where there's a will, there's a way. And, would you pose naked? Becky Dickinson did and she doesn't regret it... turn to page 38 to find out why.

As we hit the 'hump' day (middle) of January, let's celebrate getting this far!

Have a great week.

Hannah

Hannah Fernando, Editor
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WHAT A WEEK

Here's what the stars have been up to in the last seven days

Kate to join *This Morning*?

She's presented *Good Morning Britain* since its inception back in 2014, but could Kate Garraway be ready to jump ship to *This Morning*?

The star's name was reportedly in the mix when the show was looking for new hosts in 2023, following the exits of Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby. And there's no denying that Kate and current *This Morning* host Ben Shephard would work well as a duo, having presented together since they both joined *GMTV* back in 2000. Plus the pair are great friends. When Ben left *GMB* for *This Morning*, Kate took to Instagram to say, 'You'll be SOOOOO missed by EVERYONE @GMB, viewers and the team alike and of course especially me.'

It was Cat Deeley who got the *This Morning* gig with Ben, but with fans not warming to the pair – viewing figures reportedly went from over a million to less than half of that within their first two months – Kate, 57, is said to be keen to join the show should she be approached. A source revealed, 'Kate is going to focus on getting more work [this] year. She has big financial worries, so she's chatting to ITV about new opportunities and will be going up for other big shows.'

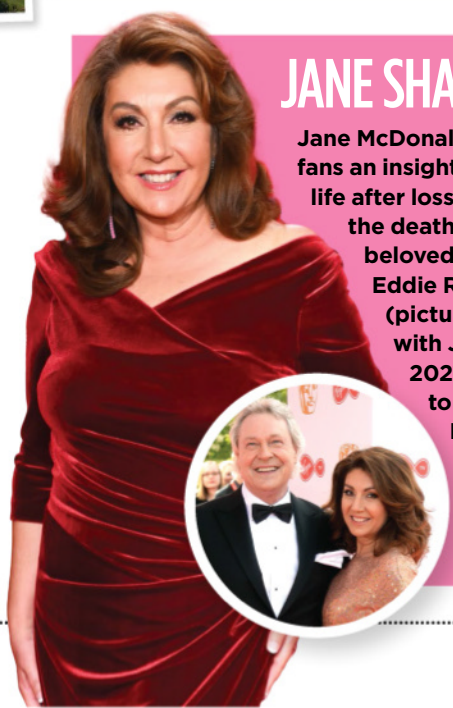
So, if the *This Morning* gig was up for grabs, Kate may well be keen, though she certainly wouldn't want to step on Cat's toes and would likely only consider if there was a genuine opportunity. Ahead of Cat's *This Morning* debut, Kate wished her luck on Instagram, writing, 'Can't wait to see you – you'll have a ball.'

One person who wouldn't be happy about Kate's possible move is her *GMB* co-star Susanna Reid, who previously said, 'Please don't go anywhere, Kate!'

But could the star be tempted? We'll have to wait and see.

BRANGELINA'S BITTER BATTLE

After an eight-year-long court battle, former Hollywood golden couple Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have finalised their divorce. A source revealed, 'It's been a very emotional and complicated divorce settlement. It's taken a big toll on the children and the couple involved.' While another insider shared, 'More than eight years ago, Angelina filed for divorce from Mr Pitt... Since that time she has focused on finding peace and healing for their family.' With Angelina's lawyer adding, 'This is just one part of a long ongoing process... Frankly, Angelina is exhausted, but she is relieved this one part is over.' However, while they are now legally divorced, the battle isn't over yet, as they continue their dispute over the ownership of the Miraval winery they share in France.



JANE SHARES HER LIFE AFTER LOSS

Jane McDonald has given fans an insight into her life after loss following the death of her beloved fiancé Eddie Rothe (pictured inset with Jane) in 2021. 'You have to rebuild and I was very grateful that I had another life besides Ed,' Jane shared, saying, 'My career was still going on and my friends were there.' While the TV star and singer, 61, confessed, 'There's no way of dealing with [loss], you just have to rebuild [your life] in the best way you can. For me, that's going out and seeing my fans again and saying to those who have gone through the same as me, I know what you're feeling.'

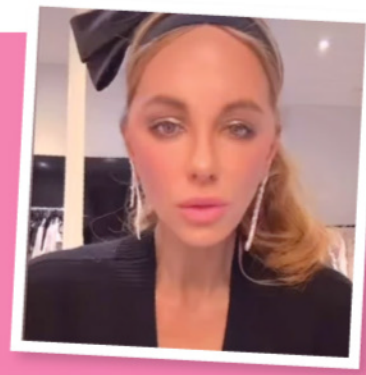
WORDS: ARIANA LONGSON. PHOTOS: BBC, GETTY, ITV, SHUTTERSTOCK, SWNS, INSTAGRAM @MRANTONDUBEKE, @KATEBECKINSALE

Kate and Ben were a big hit with *GMB* viewers

PETS OF THE WEEK

***Strictly*'s Anton Du Beke posed alongside his wife Hannah, their two kids and his adorable pups, Fox and Trot. What great names!**

KATE BECKINSALE'S HOLLYWOOD HELL



Accusations of misconduct have been made against Hollywood heavyweights, with actor Kate Beckinsale being the latest celeb to call out the 'toxic' industry. Kate, 51, shared a number of incidents from her three decades in Hollywood, admitting that she was 'felt up' aged 18 by a trusted crew member, was left covered in bruises by an actor who got a 'thrill' out of striking her during filming, and was forced to go through with a photo shoot the day after suffering a miscarriage. 'I was gaslit and made to feel like I was the problem, blamed and ostracised, left out of cast dinners, not spoken to, as soon as I mentioned that there was a problem,' she revealed.

CLAUDIA: 'IT'S DIFFICULT'

Claudia Winkleman has opened up about hosting hit BBC show *The Traitors*, admitting that she finds the role more challenging than her other presenting gigs. When quizzed about being at the helm, she said, 'We're all absolutely in it and I can't make them feel better. I can't go, "I'm going to put you out of your misery. I'm going to tell you who the Traitor is."' Claudia, who confessed she sees the contestants as her 'children' added that she finds it 'very difficult' that there 'has to be distance'. The star, who turns 53 this week, continued, 'What's so strange about *The Traitors*, and what I find so compelling, is that I want the Traitors to get away with it and I want the Faithful to find them, totally in equal measure.'

Man of THE WEEK

Taking a break from the *This Morning* sofa, Ben Shephard left us feeling hot under the collar when he stripped off for a dip in the sea.

Isolated Harry to return *ON HIS OWN*

With the Duke of Sussex returning to the UK next month, royal correspondent Emily Andrews asks if it could be the start of a more permanent move 'back home'

Harry at the inaugural Invictus Games in 2014

Prince Harry has said he's enjoying his life in the US and wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, has made it clear she has no wish to ever return to Britain again.

But I hear that Harry, 40, misses his old life and friends over here – and is even considering buying a property in the UK. This would give him the freedom to come and go as he pleases and a base to reconnect with those old pals who were ditched when he met Meghan.

When he's in London, Harry stays in a swanky hotel, despite his father offering him royal lodgings.

Palace snub

Last summer, the King did not see his younger son, but offered him a suite at Buckingham Palace – which, rather inexplicably, I'm told Harry turned down on the basis it wasn't secure enough.

In late February, it's expected that he'll be in the UK for at least a week, giving evidence in one of his many court cases against the British newspapers.

He also hopes to see his father, but although Charles will be in London for some of that time, any rapprochement will be difficult while Harry is suing the British government for removing his taxpayer-funded Metropolitan police bodyguards.

> 'If he ever did come back, it would be on his own'

One friend tells me: 'Harry does have a lot of connections, obviously, still in the UK and likes to come back to see his mother's family, particularly his aunts, and some old chums.

'He has settled in the US but still sees the UK as home.

'If he ever did come back, it would be on his own – Meghan has no wish to ever return.

'He does miss his old life to a certain extent – and of course, life with two young children is full on.

'Sometimes he just needs his own time and space, like any parent.'

Publicly at least, Harry has said he was 'very much' enjoying life in the US and has no plans to leave.

Speaking at a conference organised by *The New York Times* last month, he said: 'I very much enjoy living here and bringing my kids up here. It's a part of my life that I never thought I was going to live, and I feel as though it's the life that my mum wanted for me.'

Californian lifestyle

Certainly the Sussexes have an enviable life in Montecito, California. Their £11 million home is known as the Chateau of Riven Rock, complete with swimming pool, tennis courts, children's cottage and separate two-bedroom cabana for visitors (or when Meghan's mother, Doria, comes to stay).

PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY

Happier times: Harry with his father in 2019

The mansion boasts nine bedrooms and 16 bathrooms across the 18,000-square-foot property, which includes extensive gardens. Neighbours say the family keeps a low profile – although Harry can be seen out on bike rides, walking his dogs on the beach or on the nursery run with his two children – Archie, five, and Lilibet, three. Locals say the Sussexes plan to send their two children to a prestigious private school nearby.

There are mixed reports about his happiness. One ally recently said Harry is 'doing great', but others claim he has become an 'angry boy' who is 'more and more isolated in California'.

> 'He wants to focus on his charitable work'

One told me: 'He loves some of the "American dream" stuff like the meditation, wellness and personal training. But it does seem that he could be a bit isolated at times – he wants to return to focus on his charitable work and his service. That's why he's thought to have consulted old aides back in the UK and that's why he has used former royal courtiers to organise his Invictus work and trips abroad.'

Winter challenge

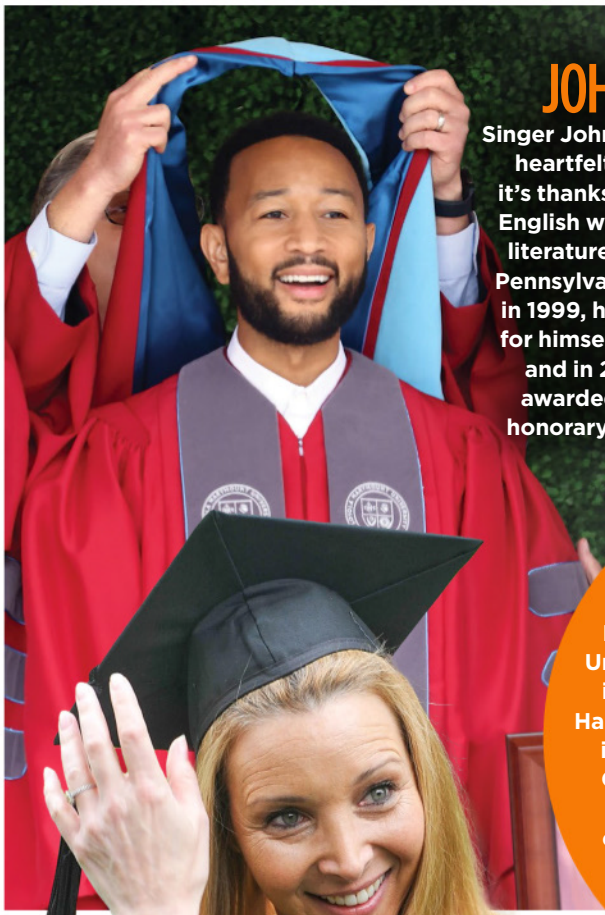
In a couple of weeks, Harry (and presumably Meghan, but her presence remains unconfirmed) will be in Whistler and Vancouver, Canada, for the first winter Invictus Games. His A-list neighbour Katy Perry has agreed to perform there, as has country singing star Jelly Roll, fresh from a 'comedy' skit with Harry about the royal getting a tattoo. It will be what Harry does best – the focus very firmly on the injured military personnel whom he counts as brothers and sisters.

Yet those in the royal's inner circle have noted he seems more relaxed when on his own and enjoys his trips 'home' to the UK.

Whether it will become more permanent, only time will tell.

CLEVER CL

With degrees under their belts, these stars are more than just a pretty face



JOHN LEGEND

Singer John is known for penning heartfelt lyrics and perhaps it's thanks to his time studying English with African-American literature at the University of Pennsylvania. After graduating in 1999, he soon made a name for himself in the music scene, and in 2014 the university awarded John, 46, with an honorary doctorate in music.

EMMA WATSON

In 2014 Emma graduated from Brown University in Rhode Island with a degree in English literature. Then in 2023 the Harry Potter star, 34, studied for a masters in creative writing at the University of Oxford. On deciding to pursue higher education, Emma said, 'The entertainment industry is pretty nuts, and having had that experience outside of it and going to university has made a big difference.'

LISA KUDROW

While her *Friends* character Phoebe was somewhat ditzy, Lisa herself isn't short of brainpower. Before trying her hand at acting, Lisa graduated from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, with a degree in psychobiology. The actor, 61, had plans for a career in research, but was soon inspired by a family friend to enter show business. Everything happens for a reason!

HUGH GRANT

It wasn't until his third year at the University of Oxford – where Hugh was studying English literature – that acting piqued his interest and he joined the Dramatic Society. After graduating in 1982, the star, 64, wrote and occasionally performed in radio commercials, before giving acting a shot and becoming a household name.

OG celebs

BRADLEY COOPER

Before he rose to fame, Bradley studied English at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. After graduating in 1997 the star, 50, enrolled in the Master of Fine Arts programme at the Actors Studio Drama School, then based in New York. Two years after first graduating, Bradley made his acting debut in *Sex and the City* and the rest, as they say, is history.

NATALIE PORTMAN

She made her film debut in 1994's *Léon*, but actor Natalie wasn't resting on her laurels when it came to carving out a successful future for herself. And so in 2003, while juggling stardom, the star, 43, graduated from the prestigious Harvard University with a degree in psychology. We wonder if her studies have helped her prep for any roles?

CAROL VORDERMAN

Countdown **star Carol is so clever that she started Cambridge University at just 17. The star, 64, said that getting in was the 'proudest moment' of her life, explaining, 'When the offer came through, I don't think my feet touched the floor for about a week. I went in the third year that the college had started taking girls, and I was one of the first 50 women to study engineering there.'**

CHRIS MARTIN

He's best known as the frontman of Coldplay, but Chris has more than one string to his bow. Before he became a singer, Chris, now 47, was a student at University College London, where he secured a degree in ancient world studies with first-class honours in Greek and Latin. And it wasn't just a degree that he gained from his time as a student – it was while studying that he met his future bandmates.

WORDS: ARIANA LONGSON. PHOTOS: GETTY, ALAMY, INSTAGRAM @CAROLVORDERS/@UWEBRISTOL, TWITTER @EMMAWATSON

The rise of SOPHIE

As she celebrates her 60th birthday, we take a look at how the Duchess of Edinburgh went from PR girl to the Royal Family's 'secret weapon'

When she married Prince Edward, the youngest child of the late Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, back in 1999, few people knew who the then Sophie Rhys-Jones was – and even fewer could predict how integral she would become within the Royal Family. Sophie and Edward share a daughter, Lady Louise Windsor, 21, and son, James, Earl of Wessex, 17, and have become treasured members of The Firm, particularly in recent years. And with Sophie, who celebrates her 60th birthday this week, now being described by royal insiders as 'one of the new stars of the show', it's clear to see why she's risen through the royal ranks...

When she started dating Prince Edward back in 1993, Sophie was working in PR after training to become a secretary at a college in Kent, where she grew up. She spent four years working at Capital Radio in the press and promotions department, as well as public relations companies The Quentin Bell Organisation and MacLaurin Communications & Media. In 1996, she set up her own PR agency, RJH Public Relations, which she ran with her business partner Murray Harkin for five years. After marrying Prince Edward in a relatively low-key ceremony at St George's Chapel in Windsor in 1999, Sophie continued working in PR for another two years until she quit in 2001 to focus fully on royal duties.

> 'She was very protective of the late Queen'

Speaking about her pivot from a career in PR to a full-time working royal, Sophie admitted, 'Certainly it took me a while to find my feet. The frustration was I had to reduce my expectations of what I could actually do. I couldn't turn up at a charity and go, "Right, I think you should be doing this," because that's what I was used to doing in my working life. I had to take a really big step back and go, OK, they want you to be the icing on the cake, the person to come in to thank their volunteers and funders, not necessarily to tell them how to run their communications plan.'

Despite finding things tricky at the beginning, Sophie has now well and truly found her feet when it comes to royal duties. In 2024, she placed fifth on the 'hardest working royal' list, attending an impressive 108 royal engagements throughout the year.

Firm favourite

It was often reported that Sophie was a favourite of the late Queen Elizabeth, with many royal experts saying the Queen saw her as more of a daughter than a daughter-in-law. 'Sophie cherishes her relationship with the Queen and not only appreciates her guidance and wisdom throughout her own life, she is very protective of her,' one source previously said. 'Their bond is very like a mother and daughter and the feeling of love and respect is quite mutual. It is very special.' Sophie even referred to the Queen as 'Mama' in a speech celebrating the success of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust in 2019. It's also thought that Sophie has a close relationship with Catherine, Princess of Wales, with former BBC royal

PR girl Sophie on her way to work, aged 30

The royal couple announced their engagement in 1999 and married (inset) later that year

Sophie has established her place as a senior royal in recent years

correspondent Jennie Bond revealing, 'I think William and Catherine feel they can confide in Edward and Sophie and there are so few people a royal can entrust with their thoughts and feelings.' She adds, 'Both Catherine and Sophie have a common touch... perhaps because they lived "normal" lives before marrying.'

Becoming a duchess

Sophie has certainly proved her worth as a working royal – especially since Prince Andrew was forced to give up his royal duties in 2019 and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex stepped down as senior royals in 2020. So it came as no surprise that she and Edward were given the titles of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh by King Charles following Queen Elizabeth's death in September 2022. With Sophie often joining her brother-in-law the King for engagements, one royal source has described Sophie as one of the monarch's 'most powerful secret weapons'.

> 'People have really taken her into their hearts'

And she certainly stepped up last year while the King and the Princess of Wales took time off to undergo cancer treatments, often being called in to represent the family both at home and abroad.

Royal expert Jennie Bond has said, 'It is so much more evident now that Sophie is a key member of the list of working royals. I think people have really taken her into their hearts, especially after she showed her obvious grief at losing Prince Philip and the Queen. Sophie is absolutely one of the new female stars of the show – elegant, engaging and empathetic.' We couldn't agree more.

Happy 60th birthday, Sophie!

PHOTOS: GETTY

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The ROYAL INSIDER

By royal correspondent Emily Andrews

WILLIAM: 'I'LL BE ROYAL WITH A SMALLER R'

As Prince William gets into his stride as Prince of Wales, it's been interesting to see him more forthcoming about how he intends to rule.

It's not uncommon for the heir to start flexing their monarchical muscles – and I'm sure King Charles wouldn't mind. After all, he asked Wills to stand in for him at the heads of state D-Day ceremony last year and the reopening of Notre-Dame in Paris. Increasingly, the heir is getting ready for the 'top job'.

The prince (in South Africa, left) wants to do things differently

But still, I was quite surprised at the briefing William himself gave to journalists after his annual Earthshot Prize awards in South Africa. He said he would have a 'different' approach to monarchy and that he was trying to 'do it differently... for my generation.

'And to give you more of an understanding around it, I'm doing it with maybe a smaller 'r' in the royal, if you like. So it's more about impact, philanthropy, collaboration, convening and helping people.'

So what exactly does that mean?

Well, having spoken to William myself on and off the record, my reading is that it means less of the official royal 'engagements' such as visiting a factory on a wet Wednesday in Scunthorpe.

Instead his personal projects – such as coming up with environmental solutions through Earthshot and helping to end homelessness – take precedence.

Of course, these all help people – which I take as his core aim. And he's right that every monarch needs to be different and to change the monarchy for their generation. But does he risk throwing out the baby with the bathwater?

In effect, I read his words as wanting to do less 'public' work – less of the glad-handing and walkabouts, say, and more of the focused charity projects where impact can be more easily measured.

Which is all very well, but surely the business of monarchy is all about pomp and circumstance – the monarch being where he/she is because of their difference, not similarity to us.

It will be interesting to see how Wills navigates this. He's made a concerted effort to appear 'just like us' with relatable family photos, a down-to-earth manner and a good line in dad jokes.

But as King William V, with 'Dieu et mon droit' ('God and my right' – the monarch's divine right to rule), he will need to be more than that.

PHOTOS: GETTY, ITV

WHAT'S THE LATEST?

I'm glad to see Princess Eugenie stepping out into the spotlight. As I said a couple of weeks ago, the King should utilise the younger 'non-royal' royals more. Yet it's in her job as an art gallery director that Eug (as she's known) has appeared in a documentary. London's National Gallery has been celebrating 200 years since it first opened its doors, and *My National Gallery* (available now on catch-up on ITVX) features interviews with staff and celebrities such as Claudia Winkleman, Michael Palin and the princess. She chose one of her favourite paintings in the collection – Antonio da Correggio's *The Madonna of the Basket* – and came across really well. More art please, Eug!

From the palace

I always love sweet stories about our late Queen, and the King recently revealed how his mother would wear a crown to bathe him and his sister Princess Anne at night as she practised for her coronation in 1953. Meeting a group of Canadian women who had attended Queen Elizabeth's ceremony, he also admitted to feeling 'slightly anxious' about the weight of the heavy St Edward's Crown worn at the moment of the coronation and worrying whether it would 'wobble'. I wonder if Charles also practised wearing a crown in the bathroom?!

Why are we *FAILING OUR CHILDREN?*

With the government pledging to create the healthiest generation of children ever, it's clear too many of them are slipping through the net

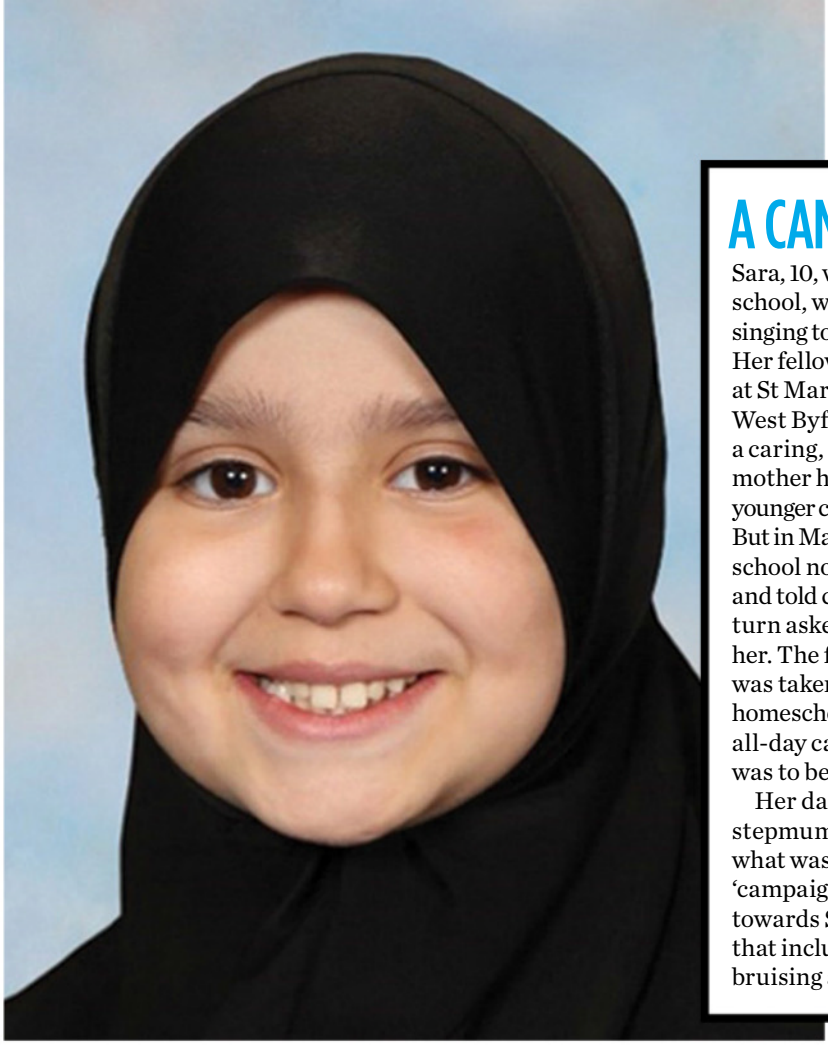
For the majority of us, it's inconceivable how anyone could hurt an innocent child, but as heartbreaking stories of cruelty and abuse of children continue to make headlines, it's something none of us can shy away from or ignore. The latest figures* show that 480 children died or were seriously harmed by abuse in the UK between April 2023 and March 2024. The stats are staggering, especially because so many of those children are harmed at the hands of members of their own families. Most of us will have heard, with shock and repulsion, about the harrowing story of 10-year-old Sara Sharif, who was the victim of a catalogue of abuse by her dad and stepmum before being found dead at her home in Woking, Surrey, in August 2023. And tragically, it's now clear that more should, and could, have been done to save her. Now, experts say the child protection system must change, but for so many youngsters whose abuse was ignored or underestimated for so long, it's already far too late...

A LITTLE LIFE CUT BRUTALLY SHORT

By the time little Star Hobson was eight months old, people were worried about her. It was January 2020, and her mum, Frankie Smith, then 20, had split from her dad and was in a relationship with amateur boxer Savannah Brockhill, 28. Bruises had started to appear on Star and concerns were raised with social services. Over the next months, there were further bruises and more concerns raised by Star's dad and grandparents, who had heard Brockhill had been using a wrestling move called a slam choke on the one-year-old.

Frankie maintained that the complaints were malicious, from people who weren't happy about her relationship, only the truth was that Brockhill was using the toddler as her own personal punchbag. The two women even filmed acts of cruelty against Star, while other incidents were caught on CCTV. Brockhill edited footage, adding dramatic music and captions, both women laughing as they filmed Star falling off a chair or down the stairs. In September 2020, Star was taken to Airedale General Hospital, near her home in Keighley, West Yorkshire, but was pronounced dead soon after arrival, having suffered a cardiac arrest brought on by head injuries that caused her to lose half the blood in her body. She also had fractures to her ribs, leg and skull.

In December 2021, Brockhill was found guilty of Star's murder and jailed for life, serving a minimum 25 years. Smith, 20, was cleared of murder and manslaughter but found guilty of allowing her daughter's death, and jailed for eight years, which was later increased to 12 on appeal. The Bradford Partnership, which oversees children's safeguarding in Keighley, apologised for missing warning signs. David Fawcett, the partner of Smith's grandmother, said, 'It's disgusting because there were five referrals. It's just beyond belief, really.'



A CAMPAIGN OF ABUSE

Sara, 10, was a cheerful little girl at school, who wrote songs and loved singing to anyone who would listen. Her fellow students and teachers at St Mary's Primary School in West Byfleet, Surrey, knew her as a caring, cheerful chatterbox – a mother hen who'd happily help younger children in the playground. But in March 2023, teachers at her school noticed bruises on her face and told children's services, who in turn asked the school to monitor her. The following month, Sara was taken out of school to be homeschooled, where, under the all-day care of her parents, her life was to become a living hell.

Her dad Urfan and her stepmum Beinash unleashed what was described in court as a 'campaign of abuse' and violence, towards Sara, causing injuries that included fractures, burns, bruising and a traumatic head injury, until, on 8 August 2023, she died. The pair fled to Pakistan the following day and, on 10 August, Urfan called police and told them he had 'legally punished' Sara and that she'd died. Police discovered her body in her bunk bed at the family home that day alongside a note from her father saying he had 'lost it'.

Sara was found to have more than 70 injuries when she died.

In December 2024, Urfan Sharif, then 43, and stepmother Beinash Batool, then 29, were found guilty of her murder after an eight-week trial at the Old Bailey in London. Sharif and Batool were sentenced to life imprisonment, to serve minimum terms of 40 years and 33 years, respectively. Sara's uncle, Faisal Malik, who was living in the house at the time, was convicted of causing or allowing the death of a child and sentenced to 16 years.

BORN INTO A NIGHTMARE

Baby Peter was born in March 2006 to his mum, Tracey Connelly. Blond-haired and blue-eyed, most of us know what he looks like from his now-familiar photo, but for years we didn't know his name as a court order meant it couldn't be revealed. Just months after Connelly met her new partner, Steven Barker, Peter started appearing at his doctor's surgery and local hospital with bruises and broken bones. By the end of the year, when Peter was just nine months old, Connelly had been arrested and Peter was being cared for by a family friend. But the baby was soon back home again, where Barker still lived with Connelly, and Barker's older brother, Jason Owen.

In July 2007, Peter's face was deliberately smeared with chocolate to hide injuries from a social worker.

In August 2007, he was found dead in his blood-stained cot, just 17 months old. He'd been tortured to death. His injuries included a broken back, gashes to the head, a fractured shin bone, a ripped ear, blackened fingers and toes, a missing tooth and skin torn from his nose and mouth.

In 2009, Connelly, then 27, was handed an indeterminate jail term after pleading guilty to causing or allowing Peter's death.

Both tried and found guilty on the same charge, Owen, 37, was handed a minimum of three years, while Barker, then 33, received 12 years in prison, where he remains despite repeated bids for parole.

Following the publication of a serious case review, several members of Haringey children's services resigned or were sacked, while Peter's GP, who saw him 14 times in the months before his death, was suspended from practice for a year by the General Medical Council.

The chilling story of Baby P is now known as one of the worst cases of child abuse the UK has ever seen. And one that should never have been allowed to happen.

Spotting the signs

Some common red flags that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- **Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality.**
- **Becoming withdrawn.**
- **Seeming anxious.**
- **Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive.**
- **Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age.**
- **Running away or going missing.**

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused – there could be other things happening in their life that are affecting their behaviour. But if you are concerned about abuse, contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 500, or go to nspcc.org.uk.

WORDS: FRANCES LEATE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, SURREY POLICE. *SOURCE: CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW PANEL

Love that BINGO FEELING!

PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY

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SOOTHE YOUR SKIN

Does your skin need a dose of TLC? This time of year can wreak havoc on your complexion, thanks to the freezing weather and moisture-zapping central heating. If your skin is sensitive, itchy, dry or red, Dr Organic has an affordable answer in its new probiotic range. The products, which include a recovery mask, a serum, a cleanser and a moisturiser, are formulated with probiotics to soothe, soften and hydrate in equal measure. They'll instantly come to the rescue, leaving your skin calm and content.

All Dr Organic Skin Calm Probiotic products available at Holland & Barrett; Recovery Mask, £12.99; Protection Serum, £14.99; Concentrated Cream, £12.99; Cream Cleanser, £11.99

ALL UNDER £15

WORDS: ANNIE MILROY

Designer DOUBLES

No need to splash out – head to the high street for one of these great lookalikes

DESIGNER VS DEAL

COAT
£3,130,
Toteme

BRACELET
£7,945, foundrae.com

DRESS
£6,100, Gabriela Hearst

BAG
£3,670, Bottega Veneta

BOOTS
£477, By Far

TOTAL
£21,322

BRACELET
£75, Oliver Bonas

DRESS
£44.99, sizes xxs-xxl, H&M

TOTAL
£325.98

COAT
£129, sizes xs-l, Zara

BAG
£32, boohoo.com

BOOTS
£44.99, Linzi

COMPILED BY: BECKY JOINER-O'RIORDAN

DESIGNER

VS

DEAL

BAG
£1,759, Saint Laurent

SHIRT
£875, Loewe

JEANS
£825, Loewe

WATCH
£185, Gant

JACKET
£409, Sandro

BOOTS
£880, Saint Laurent

TOTAL
£4,933

SHIRT
£29.99, sizes xs-xxl, Zara

BAG
£27.99, New Look

JEANS
£69.99, sizes W24-W33, Gap at zalando.co.uk

WATCH
£39.99, parfois.com

JACKET
£37.99, sizes xxs-xxl, H&M

TOTAL
£285.94

BOOTS
£79.99, Mango

In store NOW

What to look for from your favourite high-street brands this week

£40 AND UNDER

Shirt, £16

Dress, £22

SIZES 8-24

Bag, £25

GEORGE AT ASDA

Don't miss out on this stylish new supermarket collection! If your local Asda only offers a small clothing section, there's no need to worry. You can easily browse and shop the entire range online with a regularly updated 'new in' section.

Shoes, £14

Coat, £40, jumper, £16, polo neck (just seen) £8, jeans, £18, shoes, £14, hat, £10

NEW LOOK

If it hasn't been on your shopping radar for a while, it's definitely time to revisit New Look. Find everything from stylish knits and everyday basics to statement accessories to finish your look. And whatever you do, make sure you visit the shoe section.

SIZES 8-22

Dress, £22.99

Bag, £27.99

Shoes, £27.99

Skirt, £36.99

Cardigan, £39.99

Jeans, £29.99

ZARA

Head to Zara, where you'll find a carefully curated blend of runway-inspired trends and timeless wardrobe classics, designed to effortlessly elevate your everyday attire and help you create chic, versatile looks for any occasion.

Jumper, £29.99

Skirt, £35.99

SIZES XXS-XXL

FREEMANS.COM

Dive into this online shopping destination, where you can explore a wide range of fashionable brands, making it simple and convenient to refresh your look and update your wardrobe with just a few clicks, all from the comfort of your home.

SIZES 10-24

Dress, £39

Jumper, £39

Dress, £35

Jumper, £35

Jumper, £35, jeans, £35; rings, stylist's own

COMPILED BY: BECKY JOINER-O'RIORDAN

Head-to-toe H

Shed your winter skin with these nourishing

Top shelf, left to right: Q+A Collagen Booster Serum, £12, Holland & Barrett; Weleda Skin Food Body Butter, £19.95, Boots; Fresh Elements Non-Stop Dew Drops, £15, M&S; Botanics Hydrating Plumping Serum, £8.99, Boots; Neutrogena Hydro Boost Ultra Light Hydrating Serum, £16.50, Boots; Body Proud Sleep Hero Overnight Body Mask, £12.95, beautybay.com; L'Occitane Combawa Rich Body Lotion, £29, uk.loccitane.com; Sanctuary Spa Lily & Rose Ultra Rich Shower Oil, £9.50, lookfantastic.com; Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, £11.50, Boots; Method Chamomile Wind Down Body Wash, £6.50, Waitrose; Faith in Nature Stimulating Hair Mask, £7.99, faithinnature.co.uk; E.l.f. Skin Holy Hydration Coconut Mist, £8, elfcosmetics.co.uk; Weleda Skin Food Ultra-Light Dry Oil, £15.95, Boots; Byoma Sensitive Skin Body Wash, £11.99, Boots; Soap & Glory Flake Away Body Scrub, £9.99, Boots

YDRATORS

From £6

essentials for face, body and hair

Bottom shelf, left to right: Simple 10% Ceramide Boosters, £8, amazon.co.uk; Sanctuary Spa Lily & Rose Pink Himalayan Salt Scrub, £13, Boots; JVN Nuture Hydrating Shampoo, £21, Space NK; JVN Nuture Hydrating Conditioner, £21, Space NK; Weleda Skin Food Body Lotion, £14.95, Boots; Simple Repairing Rich Cream Moisturiser, £9.99, Boots; Body Proud Thirst Quencher Body Moisturiser, £17.95, iamproud.com; Fresh Elements Eyes Queen Depuffing Eye Gel, £12.50, M&S; L'Occitane Combawa Hand Cream, £23, uk.loccitane.com; Garnier Body Superfood 48 Hydra-Sensitive Balm, £9.99, lookfantastic.com; Boots DermaCare Ceramides Hydrating Cleanser, £8, Boots; Q+A Vitamin A.C.E Warming Gel Mask, £9, Holland & Barrett; E.l.f. Skin Holy Hydration! Sleeping Mask, £10, elfcosmetics.co.uk; Q+A Collagen Body Butter, £10, qandaskin.com; Boots Everyday Skin Hyaluronic Acid Moisturiser, £6, Boots; Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel Moisturiser, £13.99, Boots; E.l.f. Skin Holy Hydration! Gel-Yeah Moisturiser, £12, Boots

PHOTO: RICHARD BUTCHER

SAVE 25% on Molton Brown duo

Luxury in your own home!

Visit realbeautybargains.com/MB and save 25%

Give yourself a January treat with this limited-time offer

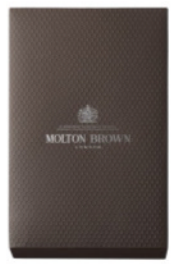
Molton Brown Orange & Bergamot Hand Lotion 300ml
RRP £25

+

Molton Brown Orange & Bergamot Hand Wash 300ml
RRP £22

+

FREE Molton Brown gift carton



Start the new year with a touch of luxury! Treat yourself or someone special to this Molton Brown hand wash and lotion duo in the fresh and invigorating Orange & Bergamot fragrance – perfect for adding sophistication to any space. This vibrant combination of sweet orange, bergamot and notes of neroli and ylang-ylang creates an uplifting, aromatic experience every time.

Whether you are refreshing your home or giving a thoughtful gift, this duo is the ultimate choice to start the year in style! Stock is limited, so don't miss out!

HOW TO REDEEM

1. **Visit realbeautybargains.com/MB**
2. **Select the number of sets you'd like**
3. **Go to the checkout and elevate your January routine!**

Terms & conditions: Valid from 14 January 2025, while stocks last. Please allow up to three working days for dispatch. Delivery by Evri 72-hour service (post-dispatch). RRP £47, you pay £35.25 with FREE P&P! Offer subject to availability. UK only.

RBB Real Beauty Bargains woman

Feel great

ANNIE DEADMAN IS HERE TO HELP YOU, THE EASY WAY!

Why you need a fitness buddy

Whether your new health and fitness training regime is well under way or you're still procrastinating and eating up the festive leftovers, think what the single thing is which will keep your exercise consistent and enjoyable. A fitness training buddy!

We can rustle up all manner of excuses not to move our bodies – the dark mornings, the warm bed, the dark evenings, the lack of time, the cost, the petrol, the effort... oh, we could go on and on. But if there's a date in the diary, someone else expecting you and a giggle and a chat to be had, then nothing will stand in your way. The fear of letting someone down is not something most of us are comfortable with so pairing up is a brilliant way to keep both of you on track.

The beauty of buddying-up is not only the goals you have in common, the shared bonhomie, the mutual hatred of burpees, but the savings too. Find a local personal trainer who has slots to suit you both and share the cost. Take it in turns to drive. Swap notes on the pre-loved fitness clothing on vinted.co.uk (you can get real bargains, especially on trainers) so that none of it feels like it's draining your finances as well as your time.

It's important that you and your new partner have a similar outlook and attitude. Someone who's going to keep dodging the Monday evening weight-training class in favour of a 'walk and a chat' isn't going to cut it. Likewise, if they're all marathons, challenges and triathlons and you can barely contemplate a charity fun run, then it's never going to work.

Talk together about your goals, which might be as basic as getting into a regular exercise routine. After a few months this routine will become second nature and the camaraderie and motivation that you share with each other will drive you both forwards not only to improved fitness, strength and health but a new shared interest and a renewed zest for life.

Annie x

*** Annie is a fitness coach and creator of The Blast Plan, a 28-day nutrition and fat-loss programme aimed at motivating women towards health and confidence. Visit theblastplan.com to find out more**

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

'Friends who sweat together, stay together.'

ANNIE'S TIP

The beginning of January very often means over-ambitious plans. Keep things realistic. Decide together how many sessions per week you can both fit. And, remember, it's better to start with two and work up, than promise four and give up.

Give this a go...

SQUAT AND SAVE

For every training session you do together, each put a £1 coin (or whatever change you have) into a jar. After three months, donate it to a charity.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY

"I only wish I'd bought my Stannah stairlift sooner"

FEBRUARY 2024 Which? Recommended Provider STAIRLIFT BRAND

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Customers often tell us they wish they had their Stannah stairlift installed sooner when they realise what a big difference it has made to their life. Give us a call to find out how our stairlifts can make life easier for you too.

Our stairlift benefits

- ✓ Large range of stairlifts for all types of staircases
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Smile for the *CAMERA!*

For years, they hid in the background but now it's their time to shine...

Slimming® WORLD

‘HAVING MY PHOTO TAKEN USED TO BE MORTIFYING’

Alexandra Lewis, 41, is a dance teacher. She lives in Widnes with her husband Graeme, 45.

For someone who lacked so much confidence that I avoided having my photo taken at all costs, standing in front of the camera at the *Woman* photoshoot and showing off my new figure, I couldn’t stop smiling. Before now, I’d duck at the sight of a camera, doing my best to avoid them, because I was just so unhappy with my body. But now, all that has changed.

I was two years old when I started dancing in 1986. I went to dance college after finishing school, becoming a professional in 2003. For seven years, I toured the UK with a dance company and was in great health and shape. At 5ft 4in, I wore sizes 6-8 and weighed no more than 9st. Touring involved a rigorous schedule, and we loaded up on carbs for energy to train and perform.

Then, in 2009, I met Graeme, then 30, and six months later, moved to Widnes to be with him.

Alexandra at her heaviest two years ago

Turning to food

Hanging up my professional dancing shoes, I started teaching children, but without the intense training or pressure to look ‘perfect’ on stage, I let myself relax. Graeme and I enjoyed meals out and I ate whatever I wanted. My clothes got tighter and by the time Graeme and I married in 2016, I was a size 14 but still, I felt gorgeous in my princess-style wedding dress.

But in 2020, lockdown meant my classes moved online. During my free time, I baked – and then ate! – Victoria sponge cakes and banana bread, sat in the garden and on weekends, drank red wine. By the time we returned to in-person classes in September 2020, I was lethargic and lacked the same energy I once had.

Life took a difficult turn as both my parents became unwell. My mum Janet was battling breast cancer and when my dad Philip was diagnosed with a glioblastoma brain tumour in January 2021, it was an extra blow. It was devastating losing Mum in March, but I didn’t have time to grieve as Dad started radiotherapy and every weekend, I drove two hours from Widnes to his home in Nottingham, eating sweets on the journey. When Dad passed away that July, the impact of losing him and Mum so quickly took a toll and I turned to food for comfort. After work, too tired and lacking motivation to cook, I ordered takeaways and on the days I mustered the energy to cook a meal, I made hearty lasagnes and curries.

> ‘I couldn’t imagine being on stage again’

By 2022, I was a size 18 with high blood pressure, terrible sleep, and my 40th birthday looming. Thinking back to my professional dancing days, I couldn’t imagine being on stage, on ‘show’ again and having my photo taken was mortifying.

In April 2023, I signed up to Slimming World Online. It had been years since I’d stood on a scale, so the first weigh-in was shocking. I’d reached 16st 4½lb.

Not alone

I swapped red wine for limited measures of Bacardi with diet cola, cut down on portion sizes and did Walk at Home YouTube videos every day in the living room. The online Slimming World community was brilliant for sharing recipes and knowing that I wasn’t alone.

Slowly but surely, the weight came off. By my 40th birthday in October 2023, I’d lost 2st and 12 months after starting Slimming World, I was 12st 8lb. My blood pressure was lower, I was sleeping better, but I plateaued, unable to shift the final few pounds, so I did the Couch to 5K challenge, running three times a week.

Now, I’m 11st 6lb, a healthy size 12 and I’ll happily pose for a full-length picture. Plus, I’ve got my energy back in the dance studio!

‘GETTING TO A SIZE 12 WAS SURREAL’

Nicky Scheuble, 53, lives in Windsor.
It was really with age that I started to notice it was getting harder to keep off the unwanted pounds. Juggling a demanding marketing career with motherhood, after having my daughter in February 2000, my eating habits were inconsistent and unhealthy. Skipping breakfast most days, I drank too much coffee, consumed too many carbs, and enjoyed too many corporate dinners, but for years I got away with it, young enough and active enough to maintain a size 12.

But by my late 30s, it became harder to balance it all and the pounds crept on.

Hiding away

Then at 42, I had a hysterectomy and went into early menopause. As time passed, I only got bigger and hid under loose dresses and leggings. I hated being in front of a camera, and on the odd occasion I was coaxed into a group photo, I hid at the back and barely smiled.

In November 2021, I moved from South Africa to the UK for work. By now, I was a size 22 and over the next year, I was ill with endless chest infections. With my health deteriorating, in December 2022, my GP asked me to wear a blood pressure monitor, and it turned out it was so high I was at risk of a stroke. It was the warning I needed. I was put on medication and knew things had to change.

Two months later, I walked into my first Slimming World group in Windsor. A friend had told me about their success after pregnancy and I’d seen ads for it, but I was mortified at my first weigh-in. At 5ft 7in, I was 18st 7lb. At home, I sobbed on the phone to a friend, but he advised taking it one pound at a time.

So, instead of driving the mile to my Slimming World group, I walked there instead, and at home I’d make Slimming World recipes, like tarragon chicken, spaghetti bolognese and steak pies, from scratch, becoming more confident in the kitchen. I stopped skipping meals and cut down on caffeine and alcohol.

> ‘It turned out I was at risk of a stroke’

Then I got an idea from the Slimming World magazine, from another slimmer who used a pinboard to monitor her weight loss. I set about making one too, decorating it with flowers and fairy lights and displaying it in the kitchen, then for each pound I lost, I moved a pin across the board. It kept me focused and motivated.

Confidence boost

After eight weeks I felt a change, and when I visited my daughter, who was living in Cheshire, she noticed too. My confidence was boosted as friends commented, telling me how much happier I seemed to be in front of the camera. It was another couple of months before I bought smaller clothes, and only because my leggings were falling down!

Buying a size 18, then a 16, and eventually a 12 was surreal but I’d never felt better. Now, my healthy eating habits are ingrained and I’ve become an avid walker.

Looking back at old photos of myself, I’m astonished and actually feel sorry for the old me. I didn’t give my health enough time or importance and only wish I had. Now, I’ve found a new lease of life and can’t wait for the next chapter.

*** The latest issue of *Slimming World* is out now**

HEIGHT
5ft 7in
STARTING WEIGHT
18st 7lb, size 22
WEIGHT NOW
12st 3lb, size 12
WEIGHT LOST
6st 4lb

Nicky hated being shown in photos

WORDS: MISHAAL KHAN. PHOTOS: ANNE-MARIE BICKERTON. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: SHERRIE WARWICK. STYLING: HARRIET DAVEY. ALEX LOOK 1: PINK DRESS, £72, LIPSY AT NEXT. ALEX LOOK 2: RED DRESS, £39, NEXT; SHOES, £32, ASOS; EARRINGS, £34.99, PILGRIM. NICKI: JUMPSUIT, £65, RIVER ISLAND; SHOES, £33, NEW LOOK; EARRINGS, £10, ASOS.

Slimming® WORLD

Feel full GET

Look fabulous in just a fortnight with our exclusive eating plan from Slimming World

With the festive season behind us, you might be thinking about returning to healthy habits to get your year off to the best possible start. We've teamed up with Slimming World to bring you this healthy eating plan full of real, filling, comforting foods. What's more, you could lose up to 7lb* as a result.

HOW IT WORKS

1 Follow the menu. Feel free to repeat any days you particularly enjoy!

2 Slimming World's eating plan, Food Optimising, is based on the science of energy density (the calories per gram in food), of satiety (how filling a food is) and how easy a food is to overeat. It's a simple way to cut calories without counting them and lose weight without going hungry.

3 Free Food is at the heart of the Slimming World plan. These are the foods you can enjoy without weighing, measuring or counting. There are more than 350 Free Foods to choose from, many of which we have incorporated into this plan.

4 On top of this, to ensure you're getting a balanced and nutritious diet, you can enjoy measured amounts of foods that provide calcium, such as milk and cheese, as well as foods providing fibre and other essential minerals and nutrients. Lots of fibre has been incorporated into this plan for you.

5 In addition, choose from two of the following each day: 350ml skimmed milk, 250ml semi-skimmed milk, 400ml plain unsweetened soya/almond milk with added calcium, 30g full-fat hard cheese or 40g reduced-fat hard cheese. Some days these have been included within your meal choices. Choose from one on these days.

6 Treat yourself! Enjoy up to two options every day from the snack list over the page.

*SLIMMING WORLD RECOMMENDS A SAFE AND STEADY WEIGHT LOSS OF 1-2LB PER WEEK, BUT YOU MAY LOSE MORE IN YOUR FIRST WEEKS

Spanish-style rice salad

Breakfasts and lunches serve 1, dinners serve 4 unless otherwise stated

DAY 1

Breakfast

Eggs on toast

Scramble 2-3 eggs to your liking in a pan sprayed with low-calorie cooking spray, and wilt some spinach in a pan with a splash of water. Serve with 2 slices of wholemeal toast (from a small 400g loaf) and lemon wedges for squeezing over.

Lunch

Spanish-style rice salad

Put 150ml vegetable stock (using 1 stock cube) and 1tsp sweet smoked paprika in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, add some dried long-grain rice and cook to pack instructions. With 1 min to go, add some mixed frozen veg. Drain well and spread out on a tray to cool the rice. Once cold, tip the rice into a bowl and lightly season. Stir through some sliced spring onion, drained and sliced roasted red peppers in brine from a jar and some lemon juice. Transfer to a lunch box or bowl and top with some rocket, 100g cooked and peeled prawns (defrosted if frozen), and a pinch of sweet smoked paprika. Seal and chill. When ready to eat, squeeze over some lemon.

Dinner

Chicken with mushroom sauce

Roast 4 skinless chicken breasts at 180C Fan for 30 mins. Meanwhile, soak 30g dried porcini mushrooms in 200ml chicken stock for 10 mins. At the same time, put 2 chopped shallots, 400g sliced mushrooms, 2tbsp chopped fresh tarragon and 300ml chicken stock in a pan, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 mins. Chop the porcini and add to the sliced mushrooms with the soaking liquid. Bring back to the boil; cook for 10 mins. Remove from the heat, stir in 4tbsp plain quark and season. Spoon most of the mushroom sauce over 4 plates, slice the chicken and arrange on top. Spoon over the rest of the sauce, scatter with chopped fresh tarragon and serve with boiled mashed swede (without using oil or butter) and green beans.

SLIM

LOSE UP TO 7LB IN 2 WEEKS!*

Chicken with mushroom sauce

Porridge

DAY 2

Breakfast

Porridge

Make up some porridge according to pack instructions, using 40g plain porridge oats and milk. Top with some apple slices and 1 level tsp honey to serve.

Lunch

Easy baked-egg brunch

Spray a large non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Fry 2 finely sliced red peppers and 1 sliced onion for 7 mins. Finely slice 3 garlic cloves and chop the stalks of 15g fresh parsley (keeping the leaves). Add to the pan; fry for 2 mins. Add 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes and simmer, uncovered, until thickened, stirring often. Make 8 wells, then crack in 8 medium eggs. Cover and cook until the whites are set. Finely chop the parsley leaves and scatter over to serve. This recipe serves 4.

Easy baked-egg brunch

Dinner

Mushroom and tarragon risotto

Soak 15g dried porcini mushrooms in 200ml just-boiled water for 5 mins, then remove (keeping the liquid) and finely chop. Add 1 vegetable stock cube to the liquid with 700ml just-boiled water. Finely slice 1 onion and 500g chestnut mushrooms. Spray a large, non-stick pan with low-calorie cooking spray and put over a medium-high heat. Fry the onion and mushrooms with 1 crushed garlic clove for 5 mins. Add the stock and 300g dried risotto rice; simmer for 15 mins until the stock is almost absorbed. Stir through 100g spinach until wilted. Pick the leaves from 15g fresh tarragon and grate 20g fresh vegetarian Parmesan-style cheese. Stir through most of the tarragon and cheese with the juice of half a lemon and lightly season. Divide between 4 bowls and top with leftover tarragon and cheese. Serve with lemon wedges.

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

* **Stay hydrated.** Aim to have between six and eight drinks a day – choose water or sugar-free drinks.
* **Don't go it alone.** Studies show Slimming World members eat more healthily than the general population, so the whole household can enjoy the same meals alongside you.
* **For extra fibre,** filling power and health benefits, try to include wholegrains, such as wholemeal pasta, brown rice and wholewheat couscous where you can.

→

DAY 3

Breakfast

Banana on toast

Top 2 slices of wholemeal toast (from a small 400g loaf) with banana slices. Sprinkle over cinnamon, if liked.

Lunch

Cheesy minestrone soup

Finely chop 1 onion and 1 carrot. Spray a deep, lidded, non-stick pan with low-calorie cooking spray and put over a medium heat. Cook the onion and carrot for 10 mins, stirring regularly. Finely chop 2 garlic cloves and 1 large courgette, add to the pan and cook for a further 5 mins. Tip in 1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes. Pour in 1.2ltrs vegetable stock; bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 15 mins. Add 150g dried orzo pasta; cook for 10 mins. Add 300g finely sliced sweetheart cabbage. Cover and cook for 4 mins, then take off the heat. Grate 120g fresh Parmesan-style cheese, then stir 80g through the soup and season. Divide over the rest of the cheese. Serves 4 or save leftovers for another day.

SHORT ON TIME?
You can pick up a Slimming World Soup from your local Iceland, The Food Warehouse or Dunnes store

Dinner

Aubergine steaks

Mix 3tbsp soy sauce, 2tbsp tomato purée, 1tsp balsamic vinegar (suitable for vegans), 1tsp onion granules, 1tsp dried thyme and some black pepper in a bowl. Halve 2 large aubergines lengthways, brush the soy sauce mixture over each cut side and marinate for 30 mins. Cut 4 large potatoes into wedges and boil for 5 mins, then drain and put on a baking tray. Spray with low-calorie cooking spray, toss with 1tbsp paprika and roast at 180C Fan for 35-40 mins. Meanwhile, put the aubergines on another baking tray and roast for 35 mins. Once the aubergines are in, place a frying pan over a low heat, add 3 sliced onions and a splash of water and fry for 25 mins, adding more water if needed. Add 1tsp balsamic vinegar (suitable for vegans) to the onions and season lightly, then increase the heat to medium and cook until golden. Serve with rocket and 1 level tbsp no-added-sugar ketchup each.

Aubergine steaks

DAY 4

Breakfast

Strawberry cheesecake pot

Put 100g fat-free natural cottage cheese in a food processor and add 1tsp fat-free natural Greek yogurt and ¼tsp ground cinnamon. Blend until smooth. Hull and halve some strawberries and mix in a bowl with a pinch of sweetener and most of the grated zest from ½ small orange. Spoon most of the strawberries into a clip-top jar or sealable pot and top with the cottage cheese mix and the rest of the strawberries. Sprinkle with the remaining orange zest, cover and chill until ready to eat.

Strawberry cheesecake pot

Lunch

Turkey 'club' sandwich

Fry 1 large egg in a pan sprayed with low-calorie cooking spray until cooked through. Mix together 1tbsp fat-free natural fromage frais, 1 level tbsp extra-light mayonnaise, ½tsp mustard powder and 1tsp cold water. Spread onto 1 slice of wholemeal toast (from a small 400g loaf), then layer up with some shredded lettuce, ½ sliced tomato, ½ sliced red onion, and 1 drained and rinsed sliced roasted red pepper in brine from a jar. Add some cooked skinless turkey slices, 2 grilled back bacon rashers (all visible fat removed), the fried egg, and 2 sliced gherkins. Top with another piece of toast from the same loaf and enjoy with a salad.

ONLINE OFFER

To join Slimming World's digital service, visit slimmingworld.co.uk/woman before midnight on Monday, 27 January 2025 and enter voucher code WOMAN2025. (See right.)

PHOTOS: SLIMMING WORLD/DAN JONES, GARETH MORGANS, ALEX LUCK, ANT DUNCAN, MAJA SMEND. ©SLIMMING WORLD 2025 'SLIMMING WORLD' IS A TRADEMARK OF MILES-BRAMWELL EXECUTIVE SERVICES OPERATING AS SLIMMING WORLD

Dinner

Cavolo nero pesto pasta

Bring a pan of water to the boil. Roughly chop 600g cavolo nero and add to the pan with 3 peeled garlic cloves. Cook for 5 mins, then use a slotted spoon to move the cavolo nero and garlic to a blender. Keep the pan of water bubbling. Add a ladle of the cooking water to the blender and whizz into a smooth purée. Tip into a large, non-stick frying pan and set aside. Add 400g dried rigatoni pasta to the boiling water, cook following the pack instructions, then drain, reserving the cooking water. Grate 120g fresh Parmesan-style cheese and add three-quarters of it to the purée, along with the pasta and the juice of half a lemon. Put the pan over a medium-low heat and toss together with a ladle of the cooking water.

Cavolo nero pesto pasta

Lightly season and divide equally between 4 bowls. Top each with a quarter of the remaining cheese and a pinch of dried red chilli flakes, if you like.

SNACKS

Choose up to two a day

- **25g mixed fruit and nuts**
- **2 mini Scotch eggs**
- **100g reduced-fat rice pudding**
- **150g fish sushi pack**
- **25g marshmallows**
- **25g baked crisps**
- **25g sweet or salted popcorn**
- **25g salted pretzels**
- **½ pint lager (4-6% vol)**
- **25ml measure of gin with slimline tonic**

* Reviewed by Slimming World's team of Registered Nutritionists and Dieticians. Remember that you can find you'll find more delicious recipe ideas, top tips and inspirational stories at slimmingworld.co.uk or slimmingworld.ie

JOIN A GROUP FOR FREE

SAVE £5/€9†

Eat real food, get real support and see real results that last. Lose weight with these exclusive Slimming World offers for *Woman* readers.

Real food

Fill up on healthy, tasty foods that help you cut calories without counting them. You'll never go hungry! Choose from 1,000s of recipes the whole household will love, so you can enjoy the same meals as everyone else.

Real support

Navigate the ups and downs of weight loss with inspiration and motivation from real people who get it. And get fitter at your own pace – whatever your starting point – with Slimming World's physical activity support programme.

Real results

Reach the weight and size you want to be – you choose your own target weight. Plus, follow a tailored maintenance plan to help you stay there. Feel good, on the inside and out, from the very first day.

Find Slimming World where and when you need them – in groups near you, online and through the members-only app. To find your nearest Slimming World group or join online today, simply visit slimmingworld.co.uk or slimmingworld.ie, or call 0344 897 8000 or 01 656 9696. And we have two great ways to save when you do.

To join a Slimming World group, our exclusive offer means you'll pay no joining fee, saving £5/€9†, between Tuesday, 14 January and Monday, 27 January 2025.

If you'd prefer to join Slimming World Online, save £15/€25 off any package with our second exclusive discount.

To join a warm and friendly Slimming World group, please complete this voucher and give it to your Slimming World Consultant at your first group.

†Standard membership fee is £5/€9 and weekly group fee is £5.95/€10. All prices shown are recommended retail prices. At participating groups. See slimmingworld.co.uk for more information.

***Woman* – Tuesday, 14 January - Monday, 27 January 2025 (dates inclusive)**

Your name _____

Your address _____

_____

_____

Telephone number _____

Email _____

Date _____

To the Consultant:

Your name _____

Consultant code _____ Group code _____

Please sign to confirm that the member has joined

_____

Please use XPRESSWEIGH CODE: **WOMAN2025**

Visit slimmingworld.co.uk/woman-terms for T&Cs

The clinic

WOMAN'S GP DR HELEN WALL ON HER TOPIC OF THE WEEK

What you really need in your first aid kit

Want to start the new year afresh? The most important place to declutter could be your medicine cabinet...

FEELING CONFUSED?

Going online to nhs.uk or calling NHS 111 online can help – they can offer plenty of self-care advice for everyday minor illnesses to go alongside your well-stocked home, but don't be afraid to ask your local pharmacist too.

With 2025 now underway, many of us will be feeling more motivated to change up our lives – including our first aid cabinets. Or maybe you don't have a place at home to store all your essential medicines. Either way, I'm here to help. A well-stocked medicine and first aid cupboard can help you treat many common illnesses and problems, often reducing the need to venture out at the worst-possible time.

While you can readily buy a pre-packed first aid kit, they don't always have everything that I would want at home. I make my own with relatively cheap items available from many pharmacies, discount and high-street stores. For me, a good first aid kit includes bandages, scissors, plasters, antiseptic wipes and cream, an eye bath and wash, gauze, burns gel, a thermometer and medical tape.

STOCK UP

When it comes to over-the-counter medication, supplies should include paracetamol and ibuprofen to reduce pain and fevers, together with oral rehydration sachets to replace any lost salts and fluids due to vomiting and diarrhoea. I'd also consider anti-diarrhoea medications (although these should be used with caution if diarrhoea is ongoing or if there is any significant pain), antihistamines to help with allergies, decongestants for annoying colds, and heartburn relief remedies.

Don't be afraid to buy the cheaper 'generic' versions of these medications over more expensive, branded ones. If the active ingredient is the same, the effect will be the same too. But, as with all over-the-counter medicines, seek medical advice if symptoms go on longer than expected or you have worsening or added symptoms.

TIME TO BIN

All medicines will have an expiry date and just like food they can go well past their best. The most likely problem is that over time the active ingredients in medicines can break down, meaning it won't work as well.

Very occasionally some medicines can break down into more harmful substances and become toxic, although this would not happen straight away. Legally, a pharmaceutical company has to guarantee the safety and efficacy of a medicine, and it can only do this by putting a hard stop date on the packet. For any life-saving medications, like EpiPens and insulin, make sure you replace these before your old ones are due to expire, so you're always protected.

Storing your medicines is key to ensuring they work in the way they're meant to. Keep them in a cool, dry location (avoid storing them in the bathroom). Always follow the directions on medicine packets and never take more than the stated dose. In particular, keep your medicines away from children.

FACT OR FICTION? COFFEE CAN AFFECT YOUR GROWTH

Fiction! Good news, coffee lovers. Drinking your daily brew doesn't affect your height. A study published in the *National Library of Medicine* found that caffeine doesn't directly affect bone health, which can lead to a loss of height. However, it can reduce calcium absorption, so add milk to your cup to avoid this.

ASK US ANYTHING

SUZIE HAYMAN AND SUSAN QUILLIAM CAN HELP

Help! My man is too fat and heavy for sex

Q My man is taking new medication, which means that he's put on a lot of weight. So now, because he's so heavy, we can't use the positions we normally do, with him on top. I'm doing well in coping with this but he's very embarrassed by the whole thing and guilty because of the weight gain. I'm sure if we could make love easily it would help him feel more confident.

SUSAN SAYS

A Here are some bedroom suggestions. You both lie side-by-side with him half over you. You kneel on hands and knees while he enters you from behind. You yourself go on top – which totally solves the problem. But also, reassure your man that this weight gain isn't his fault and that you fancy him regardless. In addition, encourage him to ask his consultant about medications that don't cause weight gain.

Do I really have to contribute again?

Q I'm really getting tired of the constant envelopes and cards circulating for people at work I barely know, especially when they leave. There's always an expectation to contribute money and write a message, but sometimes I can hardly remember who they are. Refusing seems rude, but I want to.

SUZIE SAYS

A There's nothing wrong with recognising boundaries. It's polite to write a quick note in a card for someone who works in the same building, but only close colleagues, team members or the company itself should feel obligated to contribute to a farewell gift. A simple, non-committal 'Good luck on your new venture!' works well for any situation, whether it's a new job or maternity leave. Hand back the card with a smile.

Should I let him be friends with women?

Q I've always been relaxed about my partner having women friends and being in their company. However, since we got engaged, I've started feeling that neither of us should be spending much time with friends of the opposite sex. The problem is, my partner feels trapped and argues that he's never strayed in the past, so I should trust him to stay faithful. Why do I feel so uncomfortable with all this in a way I didn't before?

SUSAN SAYS

A Your feelings have changed because your situation's changed. Like many people, you place tighter boundaries around engaged or married couples mixing with the opposite sex than around those we're dating. But it's strange that now you're more committed you're also more insecure. Make sure that this issue is sorted before you wed, otherwise your differences may come back to bite you.

I don't want her to move

Q My best friend and her husband are considering emigrating, and she's asked for my opinion. I understand why it could be great for her, but I'd hate it – I'd miss her so much! I don't make friends easily and really can't imagine life without her. What should I say?

SUZIE SAYS

A Be honest. Tell her you see the benefits for her, but admit that your feelings make it hard to be fully objective. Knowing a friend cares enough to miss her will mean a lot. Your honesty might even help her weigh the decision better than advice that's disguised by others' own concerns. If she goes, plan to stay in touch online, save for visits, and start building your own social network now – it'll make the change easier for both of you.

HOW TO GET IN CONTACT

Susan will tackle your sex and relationship problems and family dilemmas can be solved by Suzie. Write to 'Susan and Suzie' at *Woman*, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or send a direct email to asksusan@futurenet.com or asksuzie@futurenet.com.

SUSAN QUILLIAM PHOTO: ANGELA SPAIN. OTHER PHOTOS (SOME POSED BY MODELS): GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP

Clever wit

FINANCE AND CONSUMER EXPERT CAROLINE

Happy holidays!

Do you book package deals or prefer to travel independently? New research from ABTA's Holiday Habits report shows that more of us are using travel agents and tour operators – from 34% to 38% in 2024. One of the reasons for this is peace of mind: knowing someone will be there to help if things go wrong.

While most holidays run smoothly, last summer's air-traffic control issues, wildfire disruption and global IT outages focus the mind on the what ifs! So, when you're booking your next getaway, put the right protections in place.

'We always recommend booking a package holiday, as they can be tailor-made to your requirements and offer the highest level of protection,' says Emma Brennan, ABTA spokesperson.

22%
The number of people taking fewer holidays as a result of the higher cost of living.

PACKAGE PERKS

✱ Flight-based packages are protected by ATOL (the scheme run by the Civil Aviation Authority). If your travel firm goes bust, you're entitled to a refund or, if you are already abroad, the scheme aims to help you enjoy the rest of your holiday and return home as planned.

✱ If you buy a package holiday that doesn't involve a flight, for instance a coach, rail or cruise holiday, book with a member of ABTA (the Association of British Travel Agents) or similar. If your travel company goes bust, you'll be entitled to a range of rights and protections, including cover for problems before you travel or delays or cancellations. If you have a complaint, there is a service to help resolve disputes, too.

IS INSURANCE WORTH IT?

Almost a third of us don't buy travel insurance, according to Tesco Bank. When you consider that emergency medical

DEAL OF THE WEEK

Theatre lovers can get £10 tickets for over 50 West End shows, including *The Lion King* and *Wicked*, via Official London Theatre.

OFFER ENDS 31 JANUARY 2025. T&CS APPLY. UK ONLY.

FINANCIAL FIRST AID

Will my bill be affected if my smart meter isn't working?

Nearly 20% of household smart meters don't work properly, including problems with in-home displays*. It's a legal requirement for your supplier to ensure it's working, so even if you get estimated bills for a time, this shouldn't affect how much you pay for energy. 'If your display isn't working, your smart meter will continue sending readings,' says a Smart Energy GB spokesperson.

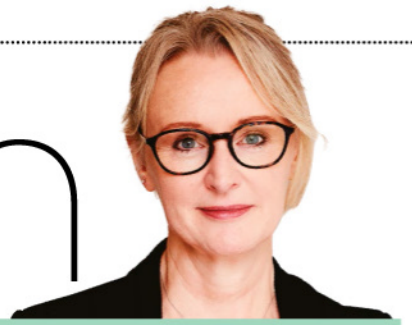
JARGON BUSTER

What's the gender pay gap?

It's the difference between men and women's average hourly pay** across *all* jobs, not the difference in pay between both genders for doing the same job. In April 2024, the gap was 7% for full-time employees, according to the ONS.

PHOTOS: GETTY. *MONEY SAVING EXPERT. **EXCLUDING OVERTIME. DETAILS CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

th cash



BLOOR CAN HELP YOU SAVE £££s

Email questions to woman@futurenet.com; add 'Clever with Cash' as the subject.

treatment abroad can cost thousands, and insurance typically just £26 for a single trip, it's a false economy. Buy cover as soon as you've booked, in case you need to postpone or cancel for an accident or illness.

DON'T FORGET YOUR GHIC/EHIC

Make sure your GHIC (Global Health Insurance) card is up to date, so you can use state-provided medical care abroad. If you have an existing EHIC (European Health Insurance), you can use it until it expires. It doesn't replace travel and medical insurance.

USE YOUR CREDIT CARD

Pay for more than £100 of your holiday booking with your credit card (even if it's just the deposit) and you'll have extra protection if something goes wrong under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act. Clear the balance before interest kicks in or the holiday will cost you more.

SMART SHOPPER

Woman's food director Jen Bedloe helps you grab a food and drink bargain this week.

SAVE UP TO £9.40

FISH SUPPER

Try a new twist on fishcakes with Tesco. Any two for £5 on selected Tesco Finest Fish & Meat Products, such as Cod & Chorizo Fishcakes and Katsu Cod & King Prawn Fishcakes. **SAVE £1, Tesco (Clubcard offer)**

BRILL BREAKFAST

Start your day with Bio&Me's 'Good for your Gut' Porridge Pots. These contain gut-loving ingredients and are fortified with calcium to support digestive enzymes. **Three for £3, SAVE 90p, Tesco (Clubcard offer)**

PUB AT HOME

Bring pub food to your kitchen with Morrisons The Best Dine in for Two. Choose one main, two sides and a dessert for £10. **SAVE UP TO £3.50**

Crémant d'Alsace is a high-quality sparkling wine with flavours of fresh green apples and a pleasing creamy finish. Excellent with seafood. **WAS £13.99, NOW £9.99, WAITROSE**

OVER 18S ONLY. T&CS APPLY. UK ONLY

The big *REVEAL*

Approaching 50 was the trigger for Becky Dickinson to finally embrace her naked ambition

I'm standing in the middle of a room, surrounded by a group of strangers. There are 12 of them; nine men and three women. They're staring at me. And I'm completely naked. Not so much as a plaster over my nipples. It's like one of those anxiety dreams – except without the benefit of waking. There's no escape. Well, other than the door. But hopefully that's locked.

As someone who hasn't worn a bikini in 16 years (thanks, kids), let alone gone topless on a beach, I'm about as far out of my comfort zone as Jupiter is from Earth. But in some kind of menopausal moment, I thought it would be a good idea to try a life-drawing class. Not as an artist, but as the model. The nude model. And, like most of my bright ideas, I'm now having second thoughts.

Like most women, I've always seen the (perceived) flaws in my own body. Living in a society that objectifies women and girls from a young age, it's almost impossible not to grow up seeing yourself as you feel seen by others – ie, men. When you reach a certain age and society finally looks the other way, it should feel like a relief. But somehow it doesn't. The same pressures apply, but the goals change from looking desirable to looking younger.

Mixed messages

While, on the one hand, we are exhorted to reject the idea of a 'bikini body', on the other, we are bombarded with adverts for fillers and anti-ageing creams. Never mind experience, wisdom, insight; it's as if the holy grail of ageing is simply not to look your age.

The only (nearly) naked bodies we tend to see are on billboards, or in the media, or on shows such as *Love Island*. With a few notable exceptions – well done, Dove – the vast majority of those bodies don't look like the vast majority of people. As a society, it seems we're not very comfortable with nudity, or at least with 'real' bodies being nude.

So when I saw the advert, welcoming models of 'all shapes, sizes and ages, no experience necessary' to pose for an art class, it felt like the perfect opportunity to embrace my imperfect body. Plus, I'd receive £40 for my time. It would hardly pay the mortgage, but as they say, 'every little helps'. Especially during a cost-of-living crisis.

My partner was less than enthusiastic, telling me I'd only regret it.

I tried mustering support from the kids, aged 16, 13, and 10. But their reactions ranged from 'Are you going to wax?' to 'Eww, that's sooo weird!' to 'What if my friends find out?' Wrong answers, kids.

Undeterred – in fact, fuelled by my family's objections, I signed up. Which meant, on a Tuesday evening, I find myself in an art studio, wondering what on earth I've let myself in for.

The bell sounds and the moment of (naked) truth arrives. I discard my robe and step into the semicircle of easels, until I'm standing stark naked in front of a bunch of people I've never met before. It's one of the most surreal, yet acutely self-conscious moments of my life. Heart hammering, palms sweating, I try to look cool (and fail), while studiously avoiding eye contact and hoping I never bump into any of them again.

First, I'm asked to hold a number of one– and two-minute poses. Wooden would be an understatement, but thankfully no one complains. I continue to avoid eye contact, focusing instead on the artists' shoes.

Next, I need to hold a 20-minute pose, followed by a 60-minute pose. At least it's a chance to sit down. Then, a weird thing happens. My awkwardness lifts and it feels like I'm entering this strange, almost meditative state. As if in placing my body on display for others, I'm able to step away from my feelings surrounding it. A kind of (art) therapy. It's both liberating and empowering.

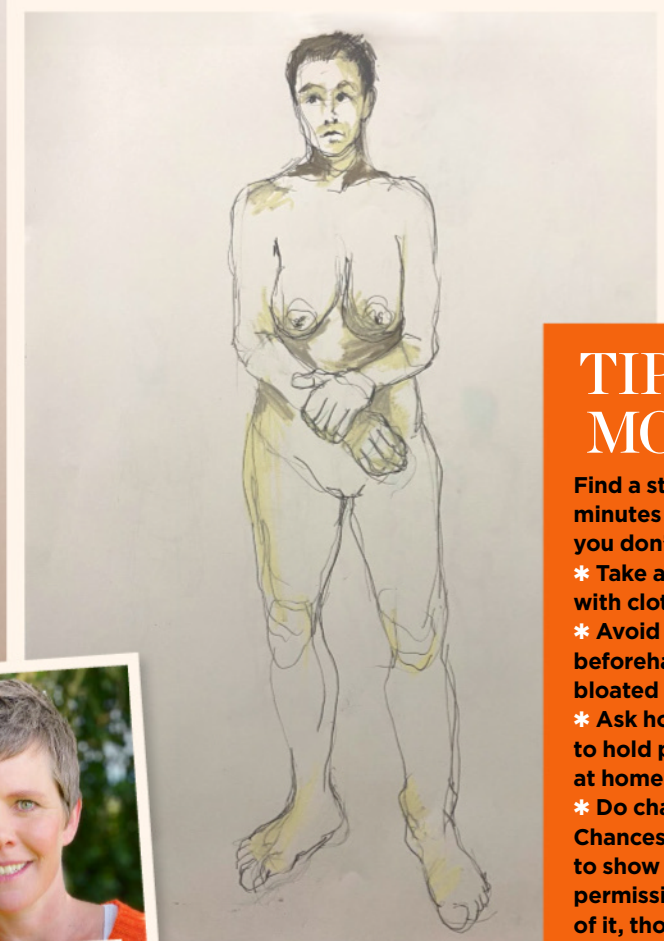
Freeing feeling

As the session continues, I feel increasingly comfortable in my own skin – and also extremely cold. There's a reason nudity hasn't taken off in the UK. Where's a hot flush when you need one? But without the aid of underwire and elastic, I could be nothing but my true physical self. And do nothing but own it, flaws and all. What's more, despite being subject to intense scrutiny, I didn't feel objectified or sexualised. I was simply a prop for people to draw. I could just as easily have been a pineapple or a pair of flip-flops.

> 'I could just as easily have been a pair of flip-flops'

Afterwards, when I looked at the artwork, I didn't see the past-its-prime body I normally see. I saw the simple beauty of the human form; kindly-drawn shadows and curves. And guess what? I liked it. Mum boobs, stretch marks, saggy stomach; the collateral damage of pregnancy, child-rearing and midlife. Seeing it on paper was a reminder that I can't prevent these changes, but I can embrace them. As I turn 50, it's time to stop caring about how I'm 'supposed' to look or what other people think and let it all hang out. Although, perhaps just not on the school run.

*** For more information, visit modelreg.co.uk**



Becky was surprised by the sudden shift in her self-image

TIPS ON LIFE MODELLING

Find a studio that's at least 30 minutes from where you live, unless you don't mind being recognised.
*** Take a robe, to avoid fumbling with clothes.**
*** Avoid eating a heavy meal beforehand, so you won't feel bloated or need to go to the loo.**
*** Ask how long you'll be required to hold poses for, and practise at home first.**
*** Do chat to the artists afterwards. Chances are they'll be delighted to show you their work. Ask permission before taking photos of it, though.**

WORDS: BECKY DICKINSON. MAIN PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY

Why I'm helping my daughter COVER HER AFFAIR

Sally has been secretly helping her daughter Emma cheat on her husband for two years

Bending down to plant a kiss on my grandson's head as I tuck him under the covers, I feel a rush of love. Babysitting my two precious grandkids while my daughter is on a date is my favourite thing to do. But despite looking like a normal doting granny, I'm hiding a dark secret. My daughter isn't out for dinner with her husband, neither is she a single mum on the dating scene – she is out with her secret lover, and I am covering her tracks. Everyone thinks my daughter, Emma, has the perfect family life – married for more than a decade with two beautiful children. But only I know that she's secretly been cheating on the father of her children for two years. And not only am I happy to aid in her deception, I'm secretly delighted about it.

I've never liked my daughter's husband, Dave. I've always thought she could do better. When I first met him in 2013, as a 25-year-old, I thought he was brash, loud and thought a lot of himself. I was confident it would fizzle out between them. Gorgeous, clever and witty, Emma, then 23 and working in PR, could have had her pick of men and I thought she'd soon come to her senses.

She'd always been very independent, but I watched her dote on Dave, and I was dismayed. But two years into their relationship, in 2015, Dave proposed while they were on holiday. They came round the day they got back and I answered the door to Emma grinning, holding up her hand with a sparkling diamond on it.

My heart sank, but I painted a smile on my face and hugged them both. 'Congratulations, sweetheart,' I told her.

Making excuses

As the wedding drew nearer and Emma ran around organising the whole wedding, a couple of times I asked her if it was definitely what she wanted, but she snapped back at me. I never said anything more; I didn't want her to think I was meddling, and I worried it might drive a wedge between us. I wanted Emma to know I had her back.

> 'The wedding day was awful. I knew it wasn't going to last'

But I think she knew I'd never warmed to him, because she was always making excuses for him to me.

She justified when he forgot her birthday by saying he had been busy at work, or didn't bother turning up to big family events because he had a headache. When he did show up at parties, I've watched him flirt with other women in front of Emma, and see her bravely try to brush it off.

The wedding day was awful. Emma looked so happy, but I knew it wasn't going to last. Dave was drunk before the evening meal. It wasn't the happy ending I'd dreamed of for my daughter. Then, a year later, they both came round to tell me Emma was pregnant. I realised with a sickening jolt that Dave was here to stay, and I bitterly regretted holding my tongue about my true feelings. She had a glittering career in PR when they met, but

after her daughter was born, followed by a son a year later – now nine and eight – she gave up her job to look after the children, while he barely lifted a finger. He carried on going to the pub after work with friends, and off on golf weekends, while Emma struggled to look after two small children, buy and cook all the food, wash his clothes, clean the house and have no life of her own.

To everyone else, it looked like they were the perfect happy family – but as the years went on, I knew Emma began to resent him. He hardly spent any time at home, he was always working or out with friends. He barely spent any time with the children, much less any time with Emma. She was exhausted and my anger towards him bubbled away, silently.

I helped as much as I could looking after the children, and two years ago Emma went back to work part-time. I noticed she'd started making more of an effort with her appearance, which I put down to her working and feeling better about herself. She'd mentioned a colleague, Ben, a few times to me – he featured in nearly all her stories from work. But I noticed she always left his name out of conversations when talking to Dave. One day, when Dave was away on yet another golf weekend, she asked if I'd mind looking after the children so she could go out for a drink after work. Of course I said yes.

When she came home, she mentioned Ben a lot, laughing about what he'd said to her. I didn't even hesitate before saying to her that if she wanted to go out for a drink after work with her friend Ben again, I'd always watch the children if Dave was away. She understood me completely, and gave me a knowing smile. 'Thank you, Mum,' she said.

I'd babysat for her a couple of times when one day she came over in the middle of the day, unannounced, for a cup of tea. 'Ben and I are having an affair, Mum,' she confessed.

I hugged her, and told her that the secret was safe with me. 'If this is what it takes for you to be happy, you know I'll support you,' I said. 'Dave doesn't need to know.'

Completely unsuspecting

For the last two years, every time Dave spends time away – once or twice a month – I go over to babysit. I arrive after the children have gone to bed, so they don't even know their mum has gone out, and she never stays out overnight. That way there's no risk they'll tell Daddy that Mummy has been out. I'd like to meet the man who makes her so happy, but I think it's too risky. The less I know, the less covering my tracks I need to do.

> 'If it ends, I'll encourage her to find another lover'

But Dave's far too arrogant to imagine Emma might be cheating on him. He's never come close to suspecting. If I'm completely honest, I enjoy secretly getting my own back on him for treating my daughter badly. I know it's immoral, but my daughter's and grandchildren's happiness is the most important thing to me.

Emma will never break apart the family, not while the children are young – although, to be honest, I hope she does one day. She's told me that the children being happy is her priority.

I know Dave wouldn't make a separation easy for any of them. So I'm happy to help Emma enjoy her life, with someone who cares about her, behind her husband's back, so she can play happy families for their children's sake.

I have no idea whether Emma will keep the affair going or if it will fizzle out. But if it does end, I'd encourage her to find another lover. As a mother, I want to do everything in my power to make sure her life is happy, and if that means helping her cheat on her husband, so be it. If Dave were a better man, I'd maybe encourage her to work on the marriage; but as it is, I happen to think he's getting his just deserts.

PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): SHUTTERSTOCK/FABIO PRINCIPE. ALL NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Katie 'breathes,' 'coos' and has a 'heartbeat' you can feel!

An exclusive
So Truly Real®
touch-activated baby doll!

TOUCH ACTIVATED

Feel her little 'heartbeats' and every precious 'breath'

Katie is approx. 19 inches (48.2 cm) long and poseable. She is not a toy, but a fine collectible. Batteries not included.

Experience The Ashton-Drake *Difference*

- Katie 'breathes,' 'coos,' and has a "heartbeat"
- Featuring *RealTouch®* skin and a *weighted* cloth body
- Soft *hand-rooted* hair
- Interest-free monthly payments
- Backed by our 365-Day Guarantee

CERTIFIED Premier Grade

So Truly Real®, *she responds to you*

Just one look from little *Katie's* big blue eyes is all it takes to fill your heart with love. Go ahead and pick her up – she's such a perfect fit for your waiting arms, you'll never want to let her go!

Created by artist Linda Murray, *Katie* is a **So Truly Real®** doll with an amazing interactive design that allows you to feel her 'heartbeat', see her 'breathe' and hear her precious 'coos'. Her *RealTouch®* skin is incredibly soft, and she's *weighted* to feel just like a real baby. This adorable little girl arrives wearing a pink ruffled floral sleeper adorned with rosebud buttons and a flowered bow in her hair...she's irresistible!

So incredibly lifelike – available for a limited time!

A one-of-a-kind by Murray can sell for thousands, but this doll is yours for *just* 4 interest-free instalments of £39.99 – that's only £159.96 (plus £9.99 S&S)*. She is complete with Certificate of Authenticity and our 365-day guarantee. Pay nothing now – complete and return your Priority Order Form today!

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QUICK AND EASY

SPEEDY chicken dinners

Tasty weeknight winners, ready in 30 mins or less

Satay chicken bowls

Fresh and zingy, this will beat a takeaway every time.

SERVES 2 PREP 10 MINS
COOK 12 MINS

- **300g skinless, boneless chicken thighs**
- **1tbsp sunflower oil**
- **1tsp each; medium curry powder, garam masala**
- **250g pouch cooked jasmine rice**
- **2 spring onions, thinly sliced**
- **5cm piece cucumber, seeds removed and thinly sliced**
- **Small handful coriander leaves**

For the sauce:

- **1tbsp yellow Thai curry paste**
- **3tbsp crunchy peanut butter**
- **3tbsp coconut milk**
- **Pinch sugar**
- **1tsp fish sauce**
- **Juice ½ lime**

1 Heat the grill to medium-high. Put the chicken thighs on a baking tray and rub with the oil and spices, then grill for 6 mins on each side, until cooked through and just crisp.
2 Meanwhile, for the sauce, fry the curry paste in a frying pan for 1-2 mins until fragrant. Lower the heat and stir in the peanut butter, coconut milk and sugar until melted and smooth. Stir in the fish sauce and lime juice.
3 Heat the rice according to pack instructions. Slice the chicken and serve on top of the rice, with the satay sauce, spring onions, cucumber, and coriander leaves, to serve.

Per serving: 706 cals, 28g fat, 7g sat fat, 66g carbs

FOOD ED'S TIP
If you have time, set the chicken aside to marinate, either on the worktop for 30 mins, or cover and chill for up to 1 day before cooking.

FOOD ED'S TIP

You could use pork medallions instead of chicken. Serve with buttery mash and steamed veggies instead of pasta, if you prefer.

Lemony chicken and pasta

An Italian-American classic with a zesty, buttery sauce.

SERVES 4 PREP 10 MINS
COOK 20 MINS

- 2 large chicken breasts, sliced horizontally to make 4 portions
- 3tbsp plain flour
- 2tbsp olive oil
- 50g unsalted butter
- 2 shallots, chopped
- 3 large garlic cloves, crushed
- 3tbsp capers
- 100ml dry white wine
- 250ml fresh chicken stock
- 1 lemon, zested, then fruit thinly sliced
- Small bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped, plus extra to serve
- 300g spaghetti

1 Generously dust the chicken breasts with flour and season. Add the olive oil to a large, heavy-based frying pan and cook the chicken on both sides over a medium-high heat for a few mins, until starting to colour. Add the butter and keep cooking until golden brown.
2 Add the shallots, fry for 2-3 mins, then add the garlic and capers, and cook for a further 2 mins. Add the wine and turn up the heat for 1 min so that the sauce bubbles. Then add the stock, turn down the heat and simmer for 5 mins until thickened. Season well, then add the lemon slices and chopped parsley.
3 Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti according to the pack instructions, then drain and serve in bowls topped with the chicken, lemon slices and zest. Pour over the sauce, top with extra parsley and enjoy.
Per serving: 590 cals, 18g fat, 8g sat fat, 64g carbs

COMPILED BY: JESS MEYER AND CATRINA GELL. RECIPES AND PHOTOS: FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

FOOD ED'S TIP
Prepare the meatballs ahead. Keep, covered in the fridge until ready to cook, or freeze for up to 3 months. Defrost in the fridge before cooking.

Spicy chicken meatball soup

Whizzing everything in a blender makes these tasty meatballs easy and speedy.

SERVES 4 PREP 15 MINS, PLUS CHILLING
COOK 15 MINS

- 3tbsp Thai red curry paste
- 500ml chicken stock
- 400ml coconut milk
- 1tbsp fish sauce
- 2tbsp soy sauce
- Juice ½ lime, the remainder cut into 4 wedges, to serve
- 400g vermicelli rice noodles
- 1tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil
- 4tbsp crispy onions, to serve (optional)
- 1 red chilli, sliced, to serve (optional)

For the meatballs:

- 5 skinless, boneless chicken thighs (about 500g)
- 2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 2cm ginger, roughly chopped
- Small bunch coriander, plus extra leaves to garnish
- 1 stalk lemongrass (outer layer removed), roughly chopped
- Zest 1 lime

1 Put all the meatball ingredients in a blender. Season with a little fish sauce or salt, then whizz until smooth. Shape into 16 golf ball-sized portions, then transfer to a lined baking tray. Cover and chill.
2 Meanwhile, for the broth, put the curry paste, stock, coconut milk, fish sauce, soy sauce and lime juice in a medium pan. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 5 mins.
3 Cook the noodles according to the pack instructions.
4 Put the oil in a large frying pan set on a medium heat. Fry the meatballs for 10-15 mins, turning occasionally – ensure that the sides are evenly browned and cooked through.
5 Divide the noodles and meatballs between 4 deep bowls, then pour over the broth, garnish with coriander leaves and serve with lime wedges, crispy onions and chilli, as liked.
Per serving: 711 cals, 24g fat, 16g sat fat, 88g carbs

BARGAIN bathroom updates

Breathe new life into your washroom with a luxurious mix of delicate pinks and moody blooms

YesColours Emulsion in Mellow Pink, £28 for 1ltr, yescolours.com

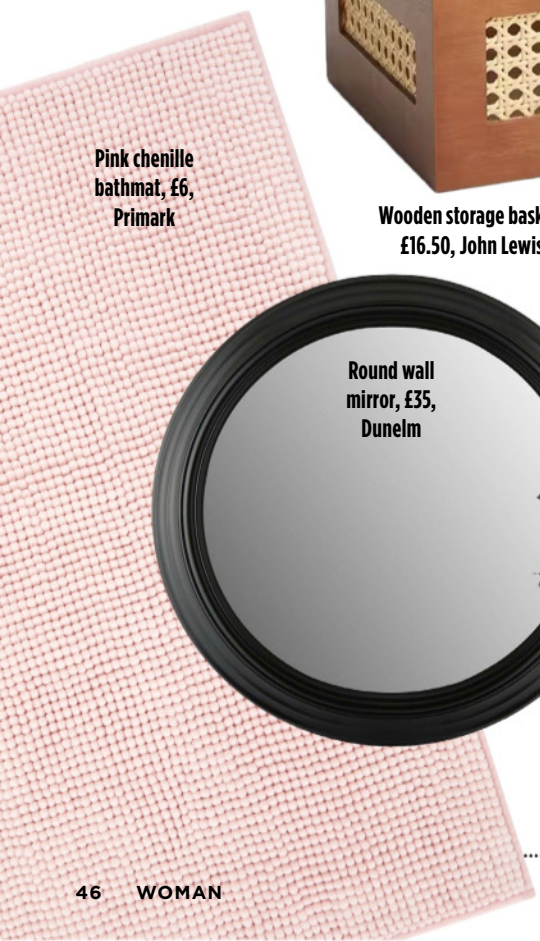
Patterned ceramic soap dispenser, £10, Next

Bath sheet, £12, B&M

Speckled wall hook, £18, Anthropologie

Framed print, £25, Dunelm

Wooden storage basket, £16.50, John Lewis



Pink chenille bathmat, £6, Primark

Round wall mirror, £35, Dunelm

Vase with artificial dried flowers, £12.50, Moss & Sweetpea at M&S

Toothbrush holder, £5, B&M

Revitalise room diffuser, £17, M&S

Farnley panelled under sink cupboard, £135, Premium marble soap dispenser, £22, Hand towel, £6, Rechargeable light up wall mirror, £150, all Next

Dark green toilet brush & holder, £7, Argos

Glass storage jar, £16, Oliver Bonas

Bathroom door plaque, £8, Dunelm

Wooden loo roll holder, £17, Habitat

10 WAYS TO STYLE YOUR SPACE

1 PLAY WITH COLOUR
Mixing pastels and darker shades can work well to give your space more of a contemporary feel.

2 ADD BLOOMS
Whether it's a statement wallpaper or an eye-catching framed print, adding some bold blooms to your decor is a timeless choice.

3 KEEP IT FRESH
A richly scented diffuser or an aromatic candle will keep your room smelling like a luxury spa.

4 HANG A MIRROR
As well as being practical, a large wall mirror will reflect light and give the illusion of a bigger room.

5 UPDATE YOUR ACCESSORIES
Switching your toothbrush holder and soap dispenser for pieces that match your colour scheme can add a polished feel to your sink.

6 TIDY UP
Storage baskets and extra shelving can keep your bathroom free from clutter and feeling calm.

7 REFRESH YOUR BATHROOM TOWELS
Replace your old mismatched towels with a matching set to create a neat and pulled-together vibe.

8 FILL THE FLOOR
A bright and snuggly-soft bath mat will feel cosy underfoot while adding some fun to your room.

9 ADD PETALS
Dried blooms are a big trend right now and won't need replacing anytime soon – you'll have flowers minus the effort!

10 UPCYCLE YOUR FURNITURE
Revive old cabinets and shelving with a fresh lick of paint. Playful yet elegant pink brightens up even the simplest of rooms.

COMPILED BY: MATILDA STANLEY

Floor *FIXERS*

Take your pick from these bold rugs, whatever your budget

Monochrome Paloma stripe border rug, from £95, Ritz mango wood sideboard, £999, peacock table lamps, £85 each, and monochrome leopard wall art, £50, all Next

ALL UNDER £50

Geometric weave jute, £45, Primark

Washable Safari, from £30, Next

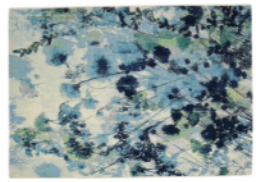
Geometric ivory flatweave, £13, Argos

Matrix geometric, from £49, Dunelm

Monaco floral, from £29.99, Rugs Factory

Milo scallop wool, from £49, Dunelm

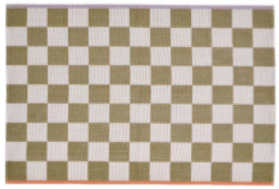
Tartan check, from £34.99, Homescapes



Homemaker Tropico, from £40, George Home

ALL UNDER £100

Natural Chester border, from £95, Next

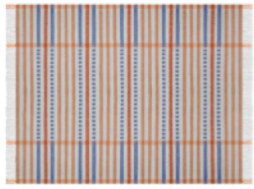


Klassrum, £59, Ikea

Habitat x Scion Padukka, £65, Habitat

Jungle flatweave, £55, Argos

Florage, £66, Furn



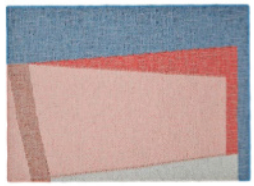
Jute striped, £99, M&S

Dark stripe, £99.99, H&M

Ella pink scalloped, £79.99, Daals

ALL UNDER £200

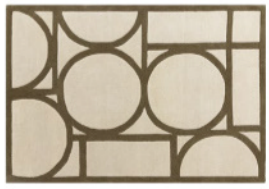
Habitat 60 geo carved, £125, Habitat



Abstract jute, £149, M&S

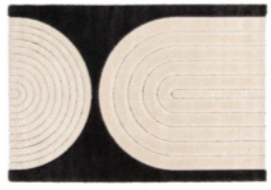
Checked jute, £139.99, H&M

Boynton blue, £119, wayfair.co.uk



Orson, £199, Cult Furniture

Dorsey pink, £110, B&Q



Chios black, £125, B&Q

Remington, £199, Cult Furniture

COMPILED BY: ESME CLEMO

A weekend in... NAPLES

This underrated Italian city is having a moment – here's how to make the most of it

Why go?

Arty with a gritty edge and lots of eateries, spanning from low-key pizza joints to homely restaurants serving up exquisite pasta dishes, Naples never fails to impress.

This colourful and often chaotic city has an energy like no other; it delights on every corner from the leafy Vomero district to the trattoria and church-filled lanes of Quartieri Spagnoli. If you time your trip well in early spring, you'll witness this city at its best – without the crowds.

There's so much to see and do in Naples that you could quite easily spend a couple of months getting truly acquainted with the place, but if time isn't on your side, here's how to spend the perfect 48 hours in Italy's coolest city.

Admire the sculptures and architecture

Take in the art

There are a few must-sees, including the Museo Cappella Sansevero, where a handful of Europe's most stunning sculptures can be found. Look out for the *Veiled Christ* by Giuseppe Sanmartino, Antonio Corradini's tomb monument titled *The Veiled Truth*, and *The Release from Deception* by Francesco Queirolo. They all feature incredible artistic skill with translucent veils and fishing nets crafted from marble.

Afterwards, view some newer art in the form of Banksy's mural, *Madonna con la Pistola*, hiding under a protective cover on the wall next to Girolamini Church. Napolitanos adore Argentine Diego Maradona, who joined the city's football team in 1984 and helped them notch up numerous successes. Whether you love the beautiful game or not, the shrine in Scudetto Tarsia is a fun place to visit, as it's overflowing with murals and images of the footballer.

Marvel at Sansevero Chapel Museum

Shoppers' delights

Naples has a wonderful mix of high-end boutiques, local artisan shops and bustling street markets. Its historic centre is home to independent shops, selling handcrafted leather goods, intricate jewellery, and traditional Neapolitan ceramics, while the streets near Piazza dei Martiri are where you'll find some of the most iconic Italian designers. For something a little different, explore Spaccanapoli and Via San Gregorio Armeno, where narrow streets are lined with small shops selling handmade nativity scenes, figurines and models all year round.

WORDS: LYDIA SWINSCOE. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, COURTESY OF THE AIRBNB COMMUNITY. DETAILS CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

Eat your way around town

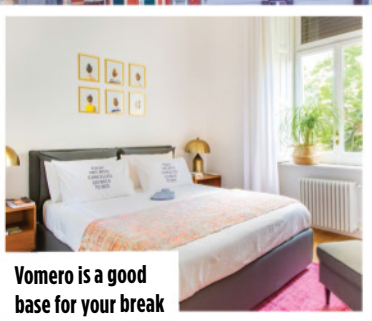
Not to be missed: tuck into pizza

Naples is synonymous with pizza, and there are a couple of pizzerias you should not miss. First off, L'Antica Pizzeria da Michele, which became more popular than ever after the publication and film of *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. It's worth the queue to savour Da Michele's pizzas, which have the ideal balance of chewy dough and a crispy base with just a few toppings to choose from, including tangy pecorino cheese and locally grown tomatoes.

Or check out Pizzeria di Matteo, where equally good pizzas and crocchès (Neapolitan potato croquettes) await. Some of the best pasta dishes can be found in Vomero at Buatta di Angela Gargiulo, a cosy space that draws mostly locals and the occasional tourist in the know. If you've still got space, gelato from nearby Il Gelato Mennella is a treat, with flavours like pistachio and almond.

View of the historic centre of the city

Gorgeous stay



Vomero is a good base for your break

Stay in the hilltop district of Vomero, where there is a calming breeze and a great selection of places to eat. It's just a short funicular ride into the heart of the town and it doesn't get overrun with tourists like other parts of the city. This one-bed luxury suite listed on Airbnb (Lordi 6) is beautifully decorated and adjacent to the owner's art-filled home, so you can get local knowledge on tap should you need a few tips. It's priced from £128 per night, airbnb.com.

Book it **Fly from London Gatwick to Naples from £51 return with Wizz Air (wizzair.com).**

*** Always check the latest travel advice before booking a trip**

woman Travel offers

André Rieu

LIVE IN HIS HOMETOWN OF MAASTRICHT

Departs 10th July 2025

Armed with his incredible 60-piece Johann Strauss Orchestra, the King of Waltz is returning to Maastricht in summer 2025 for his now legendary hometown concert! Renowned for his spectacular extravaganzas like no other, André Rieu continues to mesmerise fans across the world with his mix of emotional ballads, iconic waltzes and witty showmanship. Come and discover what makes the violin maestro's concerts so magical, live in the picturesque Vrijthof Square and set against the backdrop of Maastricht's charming Old Town.

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Return coach travel* & ferry crossings • 3 nights at a selected 3 or 4★hotel in Belgium/Germany/the Netherlands with breakfast • Ticket to André Rieu concert at Vrijthof Square, Maastricht (category 4) • Excursion to Amsterdam or Brussels or Cologne (depending on your hotel location)

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CROSSWORD & STARS

Put your feet up and have a go at this week's puzzle

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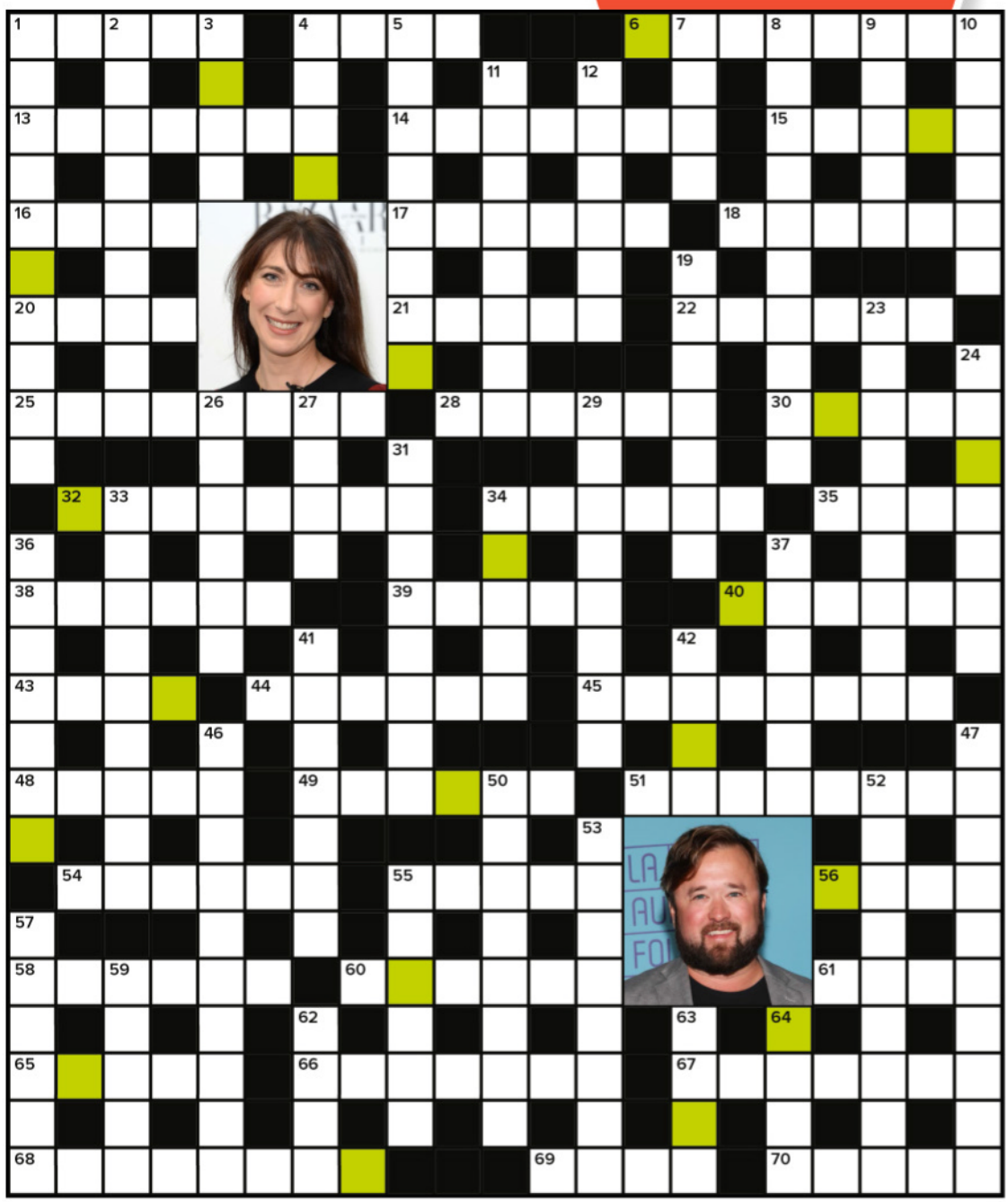
What do entrepreneur Samantha Cameron and actor Haley Joel Osment have in common? To find out, solve the crossword then read down the shaded squares for the five-word answer.

ACROSS

1 Encounters (5)
4 Comedian, _ Whitehall (4)
6 Pause (8)
13 James _, *Titanic* director (7)
14 Educator (7)
15 Verify (5)
16 Fair or impartial (4)
17 Frightened (6)
18 Choose (6)
20 Virtuous (4)
21 Painter's stand (5)
22 Place inside (6)
25 Animal with a trunk (8)
28 Brings together (6)
30 Recording of a film/TV show (5)
32 Brass instrument (8)
34 Bicycle for two (6)
35 1990 film, _ *of Thunder* (4)
38 Bowman (6)
39 Long narrow hilltop (5)
40 John _, comedian (6)
43 Arrange in advance (4)
44 Small yellow songbird (6)
45 Drapes (8)
48 Permitted by law (5)
49 Verses (6)
51 Brought in from overseas (8)
54 Outcome (6)
55 Wonderful, excellent (5)
56 Facts and figures (4)
58 Trap spun by spider (6)
60 Horror film directed by Jordan Peele (3,3)
61 Mud (4)
65 *The Hateful* _, film directed by Quentin Tarantino (5)
66 Takes place (7)
67 Gazing (7)
68 Smaller number or part (8)
69 Largest continent (4)
70 Sand hills (5)



PHOTOS: GETTY

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DOWN

1 Lead singer of the Rolling Stones (4,6)
2 *La La Land* star (4,5)
3 Indian dress (4)
4 Summer month (4)
5 Small houses (8)
7 Merit, deserve (4)
8 Striking (10)
9 Without company (5)
10 Incidents (6)
11 _ Ford, actor (8)
12 High-pitched (6)
19 Kate _, star of *The Reader* (7)
23 Heat energy (9)
24 Own (7)
26 William Shakespeare play (6)
27 Midday (4)
29 Inclination (8)
31 Second month (8)
33 Four-sided shape (9)
34 Toy bear (5)
36 Baby frog (7)
37 Spud (6)
41 Orange vegetables (7)
42 Baby carriage (4)
46 English city on the River Severn (10)
47 Benefits (10)
50 Blows up (8)
52 Custom (9)
53 Publicly objects (8)
55 Drowsy (6)
57 Shriek (6)
59 Start (5)
62 Closed (4)
63 Jazz singer, _ Fitzgerald (4)
64 State of mind (4)

ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1 Meets 4 Jack 6 Hesitate
13 Cameron 14 Teacher 15 Prove
16 Just 17 Afraid 18 Select
20 Good 21 Easel 22 Insert
25 Elephant 28 Unites 30 Video
32 Trombone 34 Tandem 35 Days
38 Archer 39 Ridge 40 Robins
43 Plan 44 Canary 45 Curtains
48 Legal 49 Rhymes 51 Imported
54 Result 55 Super 56 Data
58 Cobweb 60 Get Out 61 Dirt
65 Eight 66 Happens 67 Looking
68 Minority 69 Asia
70 Dunes

DOWN: 1 Mick Jagger 2 Emma Stone
3 Sari 4 June 5 Cottages 7 Earn
8 Impressive 9 Alone 10 Events
11 Harrison 12 Shrill 19 Winslet
23 Radiation 24 Possess 26 Hamlet
27 Noon 29 Tendency 31 February
33 Rectangle 34 Teddy 36 Tadpole
37 Potato 41 Carrots 42 Pram
46 Gloucester 47 Advantages
50 Explodes 52 Tradition 53 Protests
55 Sleepy 57 Scream 59 Begin
62 Shut 63 Ella 64 Mood
SOLUTION: HAVE A SISTER
NAMED EMILY

Recycle

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Starscope

YOUR STARS FOR 14-20 JANUARY 2025 BY PENNY THORNTON

ARIES 21 Mar – 20 Apr

Today's drama is tomorrow's funny story. Something to remember if your short fuse gets tripped. Other people may be in the wrong, but there's no need to go on about it.

For your reading ☎09058 172557

TAURUS 21 Apr – 21 May

Take your time and be ready for inconvenience. There could be delays with travel and people could be a little on the grumpy side. So, think storm in a teacup, not Armageddon!

For your reading ☎09058 172558

GEMINI 22 May – 22 Jun

Money and emotions don't mix well. Maybe someone has made a mistake or you've got your wires crossed. Whatever the issue, don't rush to judge. There's a piece missing.

For your reading ☎09058 172559

CANCER 23 Jun – 23 Jul

Monday's Full Moon in Cancer inspires closure and completion. Something is done and, whether you're over the moon or not so much, a new chapter is about to open.

For your reading ☎09058 172560

LEO 24 Jul – 23 Aug

When events happen too quickly, it's hard to see what they mean and where they'll lead. Let the dust settle before you make an irrevocable move. Be safe, not sorry.

For your reading ☎09058 172561

VIRGO 24 Aug – 23 Sep

This would be the perfect time to make a long-term commitment and to reach a decision that has major implications. It's not an easy week, but it is purposeful.

For your reading ☎09058 172562

LIBRA 24 Sep – 23 Oct

Under these stars, people can be prone to making rash decisions. You can't do anything about someone else's lapse of common sense, but you can do something about yours!

For your reading ☎09058 172563

SCORPIO 24 Oct – 22 Nov

All the time you're motivated by love or kindness, nothing can go wrong. But if you're upset, step away and think about it. Some things can never be repaired.

For your reading ☎09058 172564

SAGITTARIUS 23 Nov – 21 Dec

A case of the January blues is best sorted by dealing with the situation you least want to address. Whether it's finance-shaped or something more personal, it's manageable.

For your reading ☎09058 172565

CAPRICORN 22 Dec – 20 Jan

January's Full Moon can come at a time when everything's looking quite bleak, so instead of all the positive aspects of a situation, you're seeing the negatives. It isn't so.

For your reading ☎09058 172566

AQUARIUS 21 Jan – 19 Feb

Manifesting your dreams can be difficult and, at this point, it may seem like you'll never get there. But don't be discouraged. It's too soon to give up. Keep on keeping on.

For your reading ☎09058 172567

PISCES 20 Feb – 20 Mar

If you're going to make 2025 the best yet you've got to trim your sails. So, get rid of some ballast and your ship of dreams will start to gather pace. Go on, you can do it.

For your reading ☎09058 172568

Starlines are updated every Saturday. Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge and last about four mins. Calls to the Year Ahead last up to 15 mins. Users must be 18+. You must have the bill payer's permission. Service provider: Spoke. Helpline: **0333 202 3390.**

TV & REVIEWS

Our pick of what to watch this week, plus the best podcasts and new books...

There's a new vicar in *Grantchester* as the ninth series of the 1960s-set drama continues and just like his predecessors, played by James Norton and Tom Brittney, he's rather handsome! Here, former *Hollyoaks* star Rishi Nair talks about joining the cast as Reverend Alphy Kotteram...

How would you describe Alphy?
He's a glass half-full kind of guy, happy-go-lucky, very positive and a bit suave. He wants to help people but there's also this stern side to him. If he sees something he doesn't agree with morally, he will always stand up to it. He can't let it pass.

What is his relationship status?
Alphy's happy being single and he's not looking for anyone. DI Geordie Keating (Robson Green) and Mrs C (Tessa Peake-Jones) keep saying, 'Maybe you need to find someone,' but he meets women and has fun with them and doesn't take anything too seriously.

Like the vicars who have gone before him, Alphy ends up helping Geordie to solve crime in the local area. What is their relationship like?
It doesn't get off to the greatest start because Alphy punches Geordie in the face! Alphy has a thing against the police and doesn't know if he trusts them. But as the series progresses, Alphy slowly changes his perception of Geordie. Eventually he realises they have more in common than he first thought. It's a really lovely journey that they go on together.

Crime-fighters: Geordie and Alphy

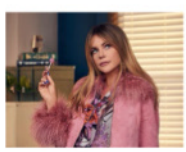
What research did you do for your role?
I went to different churches in London and in Liverpool, where I live, and sat at the back and watched the vicars do their sermons to get some inspiration. It was really interesting and to spend time in those stunning churches was nice. To tap into the era, I listened to music from the 1960s. It's become a really big part of my music library now.

How was your first day on set?
I felt like the new kid at school. And I was thinking, 'Oh, brilliant. For my first scene, I have to punch Robson Green in the face!'

*** *Grantchester* continues on ITV1, catch up on ITVX**

WHAT TO STREAM

The latest releases to watch on demand



High Potential

Disney+

This comedy drama follows single mum-of-three Morgan (Kaitlin Olson), who gets a job as a cleaner at the LAPD but ends up being recruited to its major crimes unit when it's discovered she has a knack for spotting details that help solve cases.

Prime Target

APPLE TV+

Leo Woodall, who's also set to appear in the upcoming film sequel *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, stars in this eight-part thriller as maths genius Edward Brooks, who finds himself in peril when his work on a ground-breaking theory threatens the world order.

LISTEN UP

Embracing midlife and strengthening relationships

Begin Again

In this inspiring podcast, Davina McCall speaks to experts and celebrity pals about all things midlife. Covering health and relationships and featuring chats with the likes of Fearne Cotton and Paloma Faith, the aim is to empower people to embrace midlife as their most transformative era yet.

We Need to Talk

When someone says to you, 'We need to talk', how does that make you feel? In this thought-provoking podcast, professional matchmaker and TV personality Paul C. Brunson examines how to create and sustain successful relationships through chats with people about their own experiences.

WHAT'S ON TV?

Our top picks from BBC, ITV, C4, Channel 5, Sky and more...

Amanda and Alan's Spanish Job

BBC1

After fixing up neglected properties in Italy, Amanda Holden and Alan Carr are off to Spain for their biggest renovation project yet, as they try to transform a run-down house in Andalusía, while also finding time to enjoy some of the area's traditions.

Out There

ITV1

Martin Clunes heads the cast of this six-part drama as farmer and single dad Nathan Williams, who has a fight on his hands when his teenage son Johnny (Louis Ashbourne Serkis) and his livelihood are plunged into danger thanks to a local drugs gang. The cast also stars *Keeping Faith*'s Mark Lewis Jones.

Michael McIntyre's Big Show

BBC1

The comedian returns with the eighth series of his show featuring segments old and new, such as Remember Me, which sees a celebrity being reunited with someone special. Among the stars set to appear in the run are Michael Sheen and Judi Love.

WORDS: MICHAEL DARLING, ELLA DOVE. PHOTOS: BBC, ITV
DETAILS CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

BEST BOOKS

This week, Zoe West picks the best non-fiction reads for you

The Book Lover's Journal 2025

by Freya North (£24.99, HB, McCabe Media)

Calling all bookworms! Discover the perfect companion for your reading year, as *The Book Lover's Journal* has been carefully curated by novelist Freya North to inspire you to delve into a world of incredible books. Keep track of the ones you've devoured and those that remain to be read, jot down your favourite quotes and keep a note of thoughtful books to gift loved ones. This beautifully illustrated hardback diary provides a month at a glance and a page per week, and also features exclusive interviews with celebrated authors, including David Nicholls, Marian Keyes, Mick Herron, Mike Gayle, Simon Pegg, Alexandra Potter and Matt Cain. It's a must-have for book lovers.

For more books information, see goodtoknow.co.uk/books

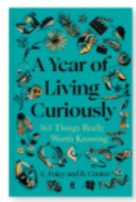
The Travel Bucket List

(£30, HB, DK)

Need ideas for your next big trip? Look no further than the 500 experiences beautifully set out in this stunning book from the travel experts at publisher Dorling Kindersley. From touring across the US on Route 66 to seeing an orchestral performance in Vienna or climbing the dunes of the world's oldest desert, there's something for everyone. With enticing photography and little 'good-to-know' snippets, it's the perfect gift for anyone with wanderlust.

A Year of Living Curiously: 365 Things Really Worth Knowing

by Beth Coates and Elizabeth Foley
(£14.99, HB, Faber & Faber)



More uplifting than your morning coffee and definitely more fascinating than your commute, this mind-expanding almanac is ideal for a daily dose of knowledge. Put down your phone and spare just two minutes a day to learn how the Victorians communicated through flowers, what cryptocurrency really is and why there's more than meets the eye to the humble bobble hat.

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Best of BRIDGET

Just weeks away from the release of the fourth Bridget Jones film, we look at some of her memorable moments

ALL BY HERSELF

Arguably one of the best opening scenes to a film of all time, we instantly warmed to Bridget (Renée Zellweger) when we see her drunk, alone and wearing Christmas penguin PJs on the sofa, with a cigarette in hand, then singing along (badly!) to Celine Dion's *All By Myself*. Iconic!

REAL RESOLUTIONS

Bridget's quest for self-improvement is a running theme. In her first diary entry, she writes, 'Obviously will lose 20lb... Will find sensible boyfriend to go out with and not continue to form romantic attachments to any of the following: alcoholics, workaholics, commitment phobics...', telling us everything we need to know about our protagonist.

GRANNY PANTS

It's a dilemma women face when getting ready for a night out, do you opt for the small, sexy underwear or, in Bridget's words, the 'scary, stomach-holding-in panties, very popular with grannies the world over'? When Bridget is getting ready to attend a book launch and hoping to impress her boss Daniel Cleaver (Hugh Grant), she chooses the latter, we couldn't love her more for relatability. But she regrets it when she and he end up getting hot and heavy on her living-room floor.

Our favourite quotes

'Am enjoying a relationship with two men simultaneously. The first is called Ben, the other, Jerry.'

'Shut up, please. I am very busy and important.'

'I will not be defeated by a bad man and an American stick insect. Instead, I choose vodka.'

'Nothing can distract me from my dedication to the pursuit of truth. Well – almost nothing. Right. I'll just pop to the shop quickly for some ciggies.'

'Friends – they spend years trying to find you a boyfriend, but the moment you get one, they instantly tell you to dump him!'

'Completely exhausted by entire day of date preparation. Being a woman is worse than being a farmer – there is so much harvesting and crop spraying to be done.'

DIDN'T GET THE PHONE CALL?

When we learn that Bridget is attending a 'tarts and vicars' party with her parents and their friends, we know that things are only going to go one way. Bridget arrives, sporting bunny ears and fishnets, but predictably and much to her horror, none of the other guests are dressed up after all, apart from her poor dad (Jim Broadbent) in a clergyman's white collar. However, in true Bridget style, she doesn't make her embarrassment known and puts on a confident facade before comforting her dad.

PROPOSAL GONE WRONG

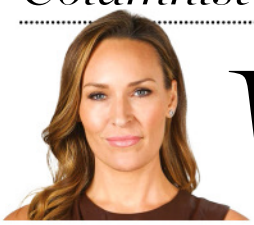
Forever putting her foot in it, Bridget almost messed up her happy-ever-after moment when Mark Darcy (Colin Firth) said he had a question to ask her and she replied, 'As long as it isn't "Will you marry me?"' After realising it was, Bridget – who was soaking wet after being splashed by a passing car – insisted that they start again and in a far-from-perfect but perfect-for-them situation, they get engaged.

SNOW IN LOVE

Things are going all too well for Bridget when at the end of a night out she invites Mark back to her flat. He reads her diary only to discover all the cruel things she wrote about him previously and he leaves. In sheer panic that everything is ruined, wearing nothing but a vest, knickers and a cardigan, Bridget chases after him in the snow. Thankfully, it turns out Mark had only left to buy her a new diary. With flurries of snow circling all around them, he wraps his coat around her and they share a passionate kiss.

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy **is in cinemas nationwide from 14 FEBRUARY.**

WORDS: ARIANA LONGSON. PHOTOS: ALAMY, NBCUNIVERSAL, UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, STUDIO CANAL AND MIRAMAX FILM CORP. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



View from THE BACK

Isabel Webster says what you're thinking

MADONNA AND THE POPE – AND WHY WE SHOULD WORRY

We're accustomed to Madonna raising eyebrows or using religious iconography provocatively – but what about her using AI to picture herself cosying up to a 'handsy' Pope Francis? As Madge has demonstrated, AI deepfakes are now able to create highly convincing images and videos, as well as audio, making it nearly impossible to distinguish between what is real and what's not.

Fake AI images of pop icon Madonna 'with' Pope Francis

A quick google will show you an array of perhaps amusing and certainly previously inconceivable images. There's plenty of Trump sharing an ice cream with President Biden.

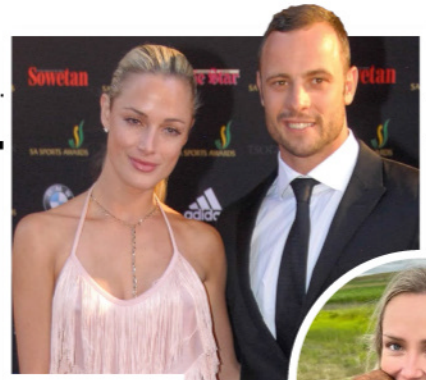
But the darker side of AI manipulation is much more sinister. Channel 4 found that 255 British people, mostly women, have been victimised by deepfake pornography. These videos are being weaponised for harassment, humiliation, and violation. News presenter and victim Cathy Newman shared her horror: 'It feels like a violation. It's sinister that someone out there has created this fake version of me, and I can't see them.'

These counterfeits can harm reputations, cause confusion and disrupt public trust. How long before a murderer is acquitted on deepfake evidence, used to trick both judge and jury? It's already leading to wrongful arrests. It's quite scary.

Fake images can fuel hate, discrimination, and division, creating a ripple effect both online and offline. They're being used for political propaganda, to manipulate elections, and to spread harmful conspiracy theories – so much so that some argue they could possibly spark a war. In an unstable world, this is the last thing we need.

So how can we protect ourselves from it? We now face serious ethical questions about privacy, misinformation, and accountability – and I've heard few suggestions on how we tackle these. Traditional methods of fact-checking and verification are clearly inadequate.

Madonna, the original Material Girl, has shown us that the immaterial forces of perception, identity, and creativity can be easily manipulated with deepfakes, leaving a trail of profound consequences in their wake.



Oscar Pistorius with Reeva and (inset) his lookalike friend

Pistorius nearly 12 years on

Who can forget the heartless murder of beautiful Reeva Steenkamp by her former Paralympic sprinter boyfriend, Oscar Pistorius? Can you believe it will be 12 years ago next month? The brutal shooting, which left Reeva dead, shocked the world. After being released on parole, Pistorius is reported to be dating a family friend who resembles his late ex.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

'There is a lot of pressure for women to prove ourselves, that we can run businesses. But if we are honest, the pressure is immense.'

Fearne Cotton reveals it's not easy for women to have it all.

A royal warning

Living the life of a Disney princess might be bad for your health! It's not just the pressure to look flawless while singing to squirrels. According to Dutch researchers, Snow White and Princess Jasmine (left) could face serious health risks from chronic loneliness, including heart disease, depression, anxiety and dementia. And let's not forget Cinderella — her constant exposure to dust (fairy or otherwise) could leave her at risk of respiratory issues! Just as well my life is no fairy tale!

Bad birth experiences

Health and Social Care Secretary Wes Streeting says failings in maternity care are a 'cause for national shame'. I hope he takes urgent action to sort it. One in four women who've given birth in the UK reported a negative experience, with campaign group Delivering Better calling it a 'broken system'. I wholeheartedly agree – I had a terrible time. How many more women have to suffer before things improve?

* **Isabel is an award-winning TV news anchor and journalist**

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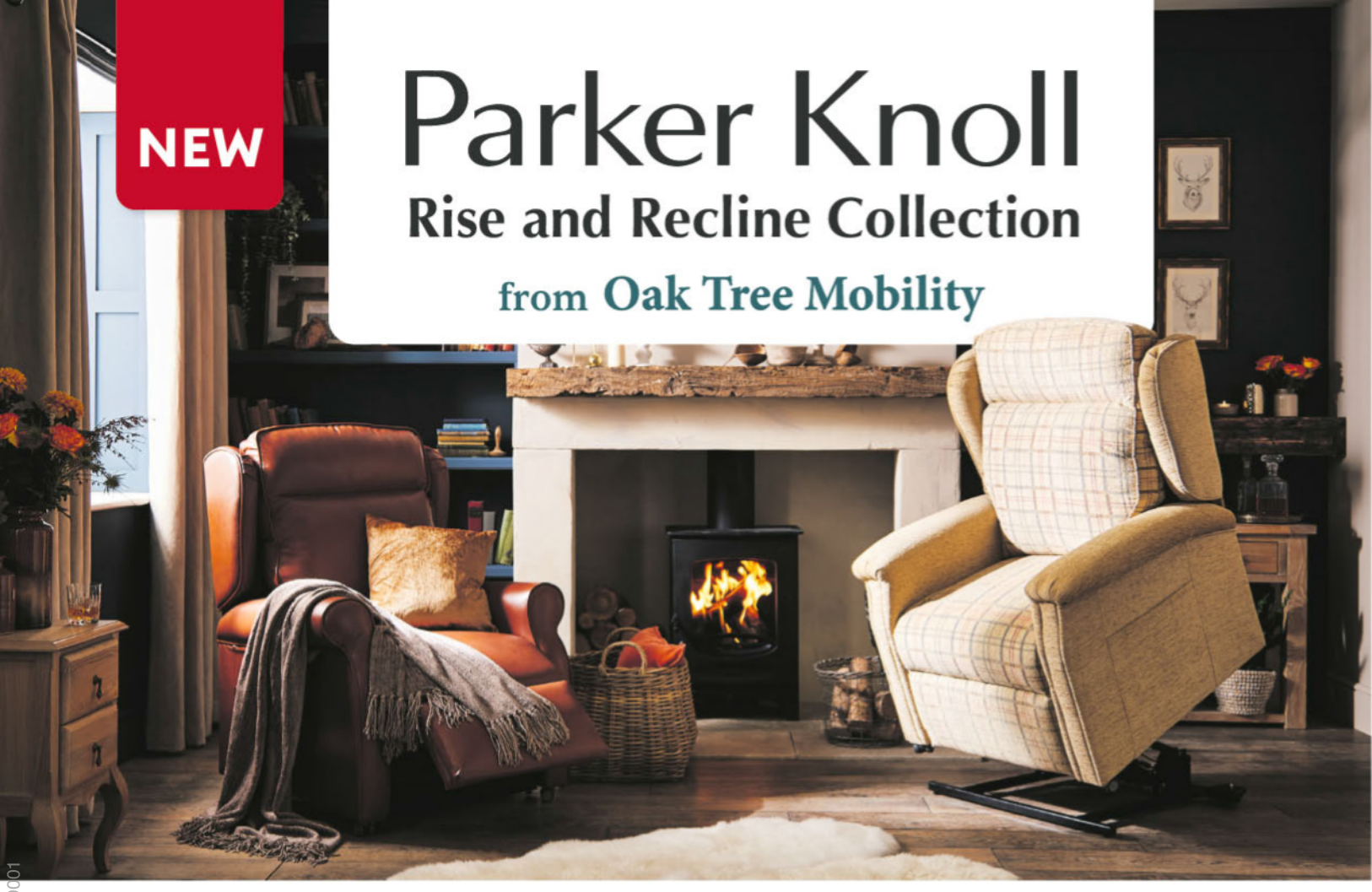

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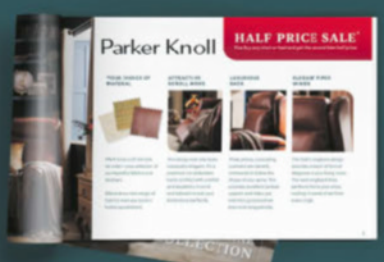

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